BLACK SABBATH

INSIDE THE ALBUM THAT MADE THEM SUPERSTARS

METAL HAMMER

RILEY GALE
1986-2020

COREY TAYLOR IS HAPPY NOW ...AND IT'S WEIRD

DEFTONES
Eros, Chi and embracing the heavy again

BLOODYWOOD
How one band from India broke the internet

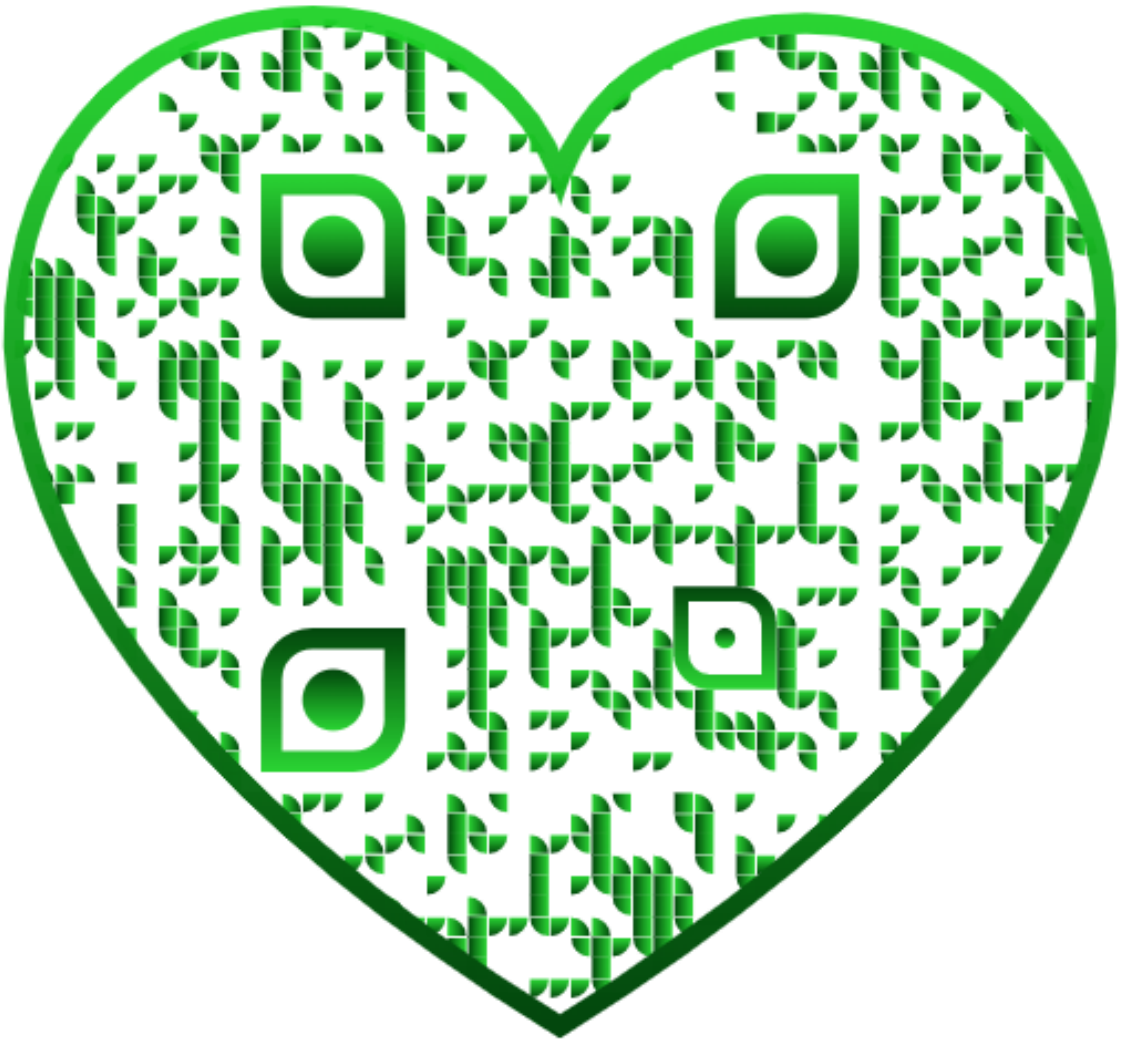
JINJER
Tatiana hasn't got time for your sh*t

SVALBARD
Vs misogynists, Facebook... and *Metal Hammer*?

PLUS **IRON MAIDEN,** ALICE IN CHAINS, **ENSLAVED,** EMPLOYED TO SERVE, **PALM READER,** CULT OF LILITH + **MORE**

TOMJNEWELL

FUTURE
ISSUE 340



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IT WAS ALWAYS GONNA HAPPEN, WASN'T IT?

QUITE HONESTLY, I don't understand how we've even got to the year 2020 with Corey Taylor resisting the urge to put out a proper solo album. To be fair to the guy, he's not exactly metal's laziest personality, but he's also not been shy about waxing lyrical about the many, often surprising, musical influences that have made him who he is. Finally, we get to hear those in all their overblown – occasionally quite ridiculous – glory, so what better excuse for a catch-up with metal's favourite big mouth about his rollercoaster last few years and how, against all odds, he managed to find some contentment at the end of it?

Right as *Metal Hammer* went to press for this issue, we received the devastating news that Riley Gale had passed away at the age of 34. As someone who was fortunate enough to meet and interview Riley on numerous occasions, I can personally vouch for what a deeply brilliant personality he was, and that he was a true credit to the metal scene. This issue is dedicated to him, and our thoughts are with his bandmates in Power Trip, his family and his loved ones.

Stay safe and look after each other, everyone.

HORNS UP!

MERLIN ALDERSLADE
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MEET THE BAND

DANNII LEIVERS
WRITER
Dannii was tasked with reining in a certain Mr Taylor for our no-holds-barred cover feature. Sadly, we still can't fly people around the world willy-nilly, so we couldn't give her a Money In The Bank briefcase to cash in on his new wrestling belt. We'll get him next time...

TOM J NEWELL
ARTIST
Having doodled the wonderful critters that covered our Slipknot cover back in late 2018, we thought we'd ask Tom to do the honours again for Corey, except this time with a slight twist: we wanted them all to be smiling! The results were delightfully weird.

MALCOLM DOME
WRITER
Our Malc knows a thing or two about classic heavy metal, so we got him to write about some band called Black Sabbath for this issue as they celebrate the 50th anniversary of their *Paranoid* album. Apparently it did alright for them. Title track's quite good.

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Head to p.34 for details

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HOW TO CLAIM YOUR FREE PLAYLIST!

THIS ISSUE OF *Metal Hammer* comes with an exclusive free playlist featuring a ton of the bands you'll read about in these very pages! This mix was specially curated for this issue of *Metal Hammer*.

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THE BIG PICTURE

MARTIN BIRCH 1948-2020

EVERYONE AT *METAL* *Hammer* was saddened last month by the news that legendary rock and metal producer and engineer Martin Birch had died aged 71. As well as producing a total of 10 Iron Maiden records across the 80s and early 90s, starting with 1981's *Killers*, Martin was also the man behind classic albums including Black Sabbath's *Heaven And Hell* and *Mob Rules*, Deep Purple's *In Rock* and *Machine Head* and releases by Whitesnake, Blue Öyster Cult, Fleetwood Mac and Rainbow, amongst others.

"He was just absolutely brilliant," said Iron Maiden's Steve Harris in a statement. "He wasn't just a producer, he was a hands-on engineer too, so he knew how to get a great sound. He was also fantastic at motivating people. He just had a knack of getting the best out of you. He was also a really nice man, great fun with a terrific sense of humour and that made him easy to work with. We all got along with him really well and the whole band is very saddened by today's news."

Everyone at *Metal Hammer* sends their sympathies and thoughts to Martin's family and friends.

FIN COSTELLO/GETTY

THE HOT TOPIC

BEYOND BORDERS

Metal is about being united and looking out for each other, and one organisation in Nepal is taking that to a whole new level. We found out more...

WORDS: MERLIN ALDERSLADE • PICTURES: DIPIT RAZ/METAL FOR NEPAL

WHILE WE'VE ALL keenly felt the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in one shape or another, the reality is that for some, it's caused unimaginable strife. In the case of the migrant workers that became trapped at the Indian-Nepalese border upon attempting to return home during the global lockdown, it caused a full-on humanitarian crisis.

"Thousands and thousands of migrant workers from India returning home amid the lockdown got stranded at the Nepal-India border with no access to food and water for days," explains Flower KC, director of Nepal's biggest metal festival, Silence, and manager of Nepalese metal band Underside. "Now, the influx of people is not as overwhelming as before, but the people who are allowed to get in the country are asked to be quarantined in inhuman facilities. Now, the major concern is that due to those poor facilities, these migrant workers are fleeing into their community, causing the risk of infections to their entire villages."

"IT'S VITAL WE ALL STAND UP FOR EACH OTHER WHERE WE CAN"

METAL FOR NEPAL

Flower KC is the manager of Underside, whose demon mascot is pictured above

With the initial chaos of the border crisis and the potential knock-on effects being similarly dangerous in an area where access to high-quality medical assistance is problematic, Flower decided to call on the people he knows best to try to help – the heavy metal community.

"Metal For Nepal is a humanitarian project that unites the global metal community to do some good work for humanity," Flower explains of the organisation, designed to raise awareness of such issues with a series of music-led fundraising initiatives. "It's something that was started back in 2015 to raise funds to support Nepal during the devastating earthquake that took 9,000 lives and caused a lot of destruction. Through that campaign, a series of fundraising gigs took place across 12 countries spanning from Europe to US, with the final leg show in Nepal. It made us realise the unity of global metal and how, truly, we are here for each other. That's why, when the news started to surface [about the India-Nepal crisis], it felt natural to restart this campaign to save more lives."

Collaborating with local partners that are right on the frontlines of the crisis, Metal For Nepal supports work that supplies food and water to migrants arriving at the border, while distributing more goods to the indigenous communities that are getting hit hard by the virus directly. Metalheads can donate directly to the cause via the Metal For Nepal website, where they can also watch exclusive videos provided by metal bands, buy exclusive merchandise or buy paintings donated by tattoo artists from around the metal community.

"SO FAR, WE have [raised] $15,000, and hope to raise more funds in the coming days to give everyone a chance to fight this virus by providing basic needs like food and water to people who need it the most," says Flower. "We have provided ration packages for 140 families for 45 days; provided more than 700 food packages for daily

wage workers in Kathmandu for 15 days; distributed 12,000 bottles of water, hot meals and sanitiser to the migrant workers; and we have a lot of more work happening right now in various part of the country. All the money raised gets to the people who really need help. Please, buy from our stores – your money would support the people in Nepal."

As for the bands in the metal scene, Flower is still looking for your help, too.

"We have had the honour of the likes of Gene Hoglan and Alex Skolnick from Testament sending us play-along video to support the cause," Flower reveals. "We would love to see more artists and bands follow suit. If you are an artist or have a band, please send us a play-along of any of your songs! The other ways people can support is by raising awareness and sharing our work in their social handles. Every bit of help counts."

As Flower notes, in an era where it's easy to feel helpless about the myriad injustices happening in the world, or about the wider effects of a pandemic which has truly impacted us all, it's vital we all stand up for each other where we can – and that especially includes the people who need us the most.

"With so much happening around us, it is so easy to get overwhelmed," he notes. "But I also believe that people have the capacity do to something about things which they feel are not right. It's about making sure you are doing your part. Every life is precious and we should always use our voice and platform to make sure everyone has a basic access to things that we take for granted."

If we can do all that in the name of heavy metal *and* helping each other out, why wouldn't we, right?

LINKIN PARK: PRESS/JAMES MINCHIN.

TO DONATE AND FIND OUT MORE ABOUT METAL FOR NEPAL, HEAD TO METALFORNEPAL.ORG

10 THINGS WE LEARNED THIS MONTH

What's been blowing our tiny brains

SUPPORT LG PETROV
The Entombed AD singer has been diagnosed with cancer. You can support his treatment via a GoFundMe page set up by the band. We're with you, brother!

WE MIGHT GET A 5FDP MOVIE
Well, if Zoltan gets his way, anyway. But who'll play Ivan? We vote for a particularly angry Bruce Willis.

STONE SOUR ARE ON HIATUS
We can't say we're too surprised given Corey's solo shenanigans, but it might be some time before we hear from his *other* other band.

LINKIN PARK PUT OUT AN UNHEARD HYBRID THEORY CUT
And it was pretty damn good! *She Couldn't* will definitely be getting a few spins around the *Hammer* office.

Linkin Park: *She Couldn't* makes us miss Chester even more

SOME BANDS RISK IT ALL TO PLAY HEAVY METAL
Just ask Arsames, who fled Iran after being sentenced to 15 years in jail over accusations of playing "Satanic" metal.

SHAVO ODADJIAN HAS 25 SONGS FOR SYSTEM OF A DOWN
...but we probably won't hear any of them because System are still refusing to actually make new music together. Sigh.

#WEMAKEEVENTS IS A MOVEMENT WORTH GETTING BEHIND
Following a national day of action last month to highlight the plight facing live music, let's keep the movement going!

GOJIRA ARE BACK!
Well, kind of. *Another World* is a TUNE!

PLEASE KEEP WEARING YOUR MASKS
Look, we know they can be annoying, but just do it, OK? Think like Slipknot.

MARTIN BIRCH RIP
A legend of a producer who helped to define rock and metal for decades.

DO YOU WATCH THOSE YOUTUBE REACTION VIDEOS?

And some other questions we let you lot ask Jinjer frontwoman Tatiana Shmailyuk

WORDS: YASMINE SUMMAN • PICTURES: JAKE OWENS

BETWEEN RIDING THE success of third album *Macro* and landing some of their biggest festival spots to date, including a set on Download's main stage, 2019 was a pretty busy year for Jinjer. Now they've got your attention (and with no tours to jump on this year), we got vocalist Tatiana to face all of your devilish questions.

What was the metal scene like in Ukraine growing up, and now?
Becca England (email)
"I'm not sure… The metal scene is 'eh' in Ukraine. There's a couple of bands that are actually working and that's it, that's everything I can tell you."

Your vocal performances seem to be used a lot for reaction videos. Are these something you watch back and, if so, what do you take from them?
Adam Beard (Facebook)
"No, I never watch them. I just don't see it being genuine because I think every reaction filmed on camera is not the first reaction, it's a second reaction to our music video or something because they've seen it before and then they decided, 'Oh OK, let me just film how I react again but on camera', and I just don't believe it. People do it just for views, as always."

***Hammer*: Do the criticisms from these videos bother you or is it something that doesn't faze you?**
"I don't even know what they talk about! I don't care if they admire our music or they hate it. I just don't care. That's it."

Who are your musical inspirations? And who are your *non*-musical inspirations?
@ZainaArekat (via Twitter)
"Ah shit, my inspirations… There are many of them, there as many as there are genres that I listen to. Amy Winehouse, Bob Marley… It will take so much time to enumerate all of them."

Jinjer are playing Hellfest next year… hopefully

What is the biggest challenge of recording a Jinjer album?
@ejirorudomakugi (Twitter)
"The biggest challenge is lack of time, schedule, less time when we recorded our *Macro* album. I wrote a song the day before I had to record it. So yeah, my brain was [blows raspberries] liquid after that, it was horrible and very stressful. Sometimes I come to the studio and I have only half a song ready. That's the biggest challenge for me, not being prepared and still doing my shit."

How can young metal bands break through and begin playing bigger slots on festival bills?
Hayley Lee Smith (email)
"How to do it? I don't know! If you know, just let me know. Come on, guys, we still sometimes play at fucking, I don't know, 3pm? Which is like the earliest that you can play main stage. We are not there yet. We've never been in that type of position where we played before headliner or something, or at least I don't remember that, maybe we did but I don't remember. At Hell In Heaven Festival in Mexico it happened; a lot of big bands refused to travel to Mexico because of COVID, so that's why we played as a headliner. I think that's the greatest thing – when you are 50

Tatiana: "Don't even *think* about coming near my belly with that needle..."

"I WROTE A SONG THE DAY BEFORE I RECORDED IT"

years old, you're gonna occupy all those main slots at festivals."

***Hammer*: Speaking of festivals, you've just been announced for Hellfest! Even though 2021 is very unpredictable, how are your feelings around that? Are you excited for it?**
"I have no idea! Ha ha ha! I really hope so, I'm keeping my fingers crossed and everything. But lately I saw a meme on Instagram that said like, 'I asked my doctor when this pandemic is over and he said, "How do I know? I'm a doctor, not a politician."' So, pfft, who knows?! This year proves to me that we just don't have any guarantees about our future. You don't know about tomorrow, so don't plan anything. That's basically how I live. I don't like to plan, but everything that is planned for the band and for every band in this world… I hope it will come true."

With Europe holding the biggest metal festivals in world, are there any places you would like to see such festivals happen and flourish?
@johnapomfret (Twitter)
"I mean, we haven't yet visited all the festivals in the world, you know? It's just only in Europe, and one in Mexico, right? I really don't know what to answer!"

Do you have any favourite venues?
@Sonszno5 (Twitter)
"I remember there are a lot of great, high-end venues in Germany. If it has a huge backstage, a shower maybe, good catering and good equipment."

You sport a lot of great ink. What was your most recent tattoo? Also, is there a favourite or one of special significance that you can speak to?
Vivek Pawar (via Facebook)
"My recent one is my throat tattoo. There are no special meanings to my tattoos at all. Maybe my Amy Winehouse and Frida Kahlo ones…"

***Hammer*: Which ones hurt the most?**
"I think [one of the] most painful was on my feet, a koi fish. That was painful. Also, my belly tattoo; I think that was the most painful tattoo ever. On my stomach, the tattoo artist who worked with me applied so much painkiller cream but it didn't work. It just didn't. It was like working for 30 minutes and then it was gone. I was sweating out, making faces, it was horrible and it still needs some touch-ups but I will never go back to that tattoo again. I'm gonna leave it as it is."

"I WANT TO SING WITH GWEN STEFANI!"

"The hardest thing is screaming." You wouldn't know it from listening to Jinjer!

The wife is asking how long it took to master gutturals, she loves how powerful you sound.
@Nnefariousjack (Twitter)
"Persistent work, practising, just like in every other sphere of our life. If you want to master something like that then there's no secret to it. The key is just the part of working, training and practising. That's it. It's not a secret!"

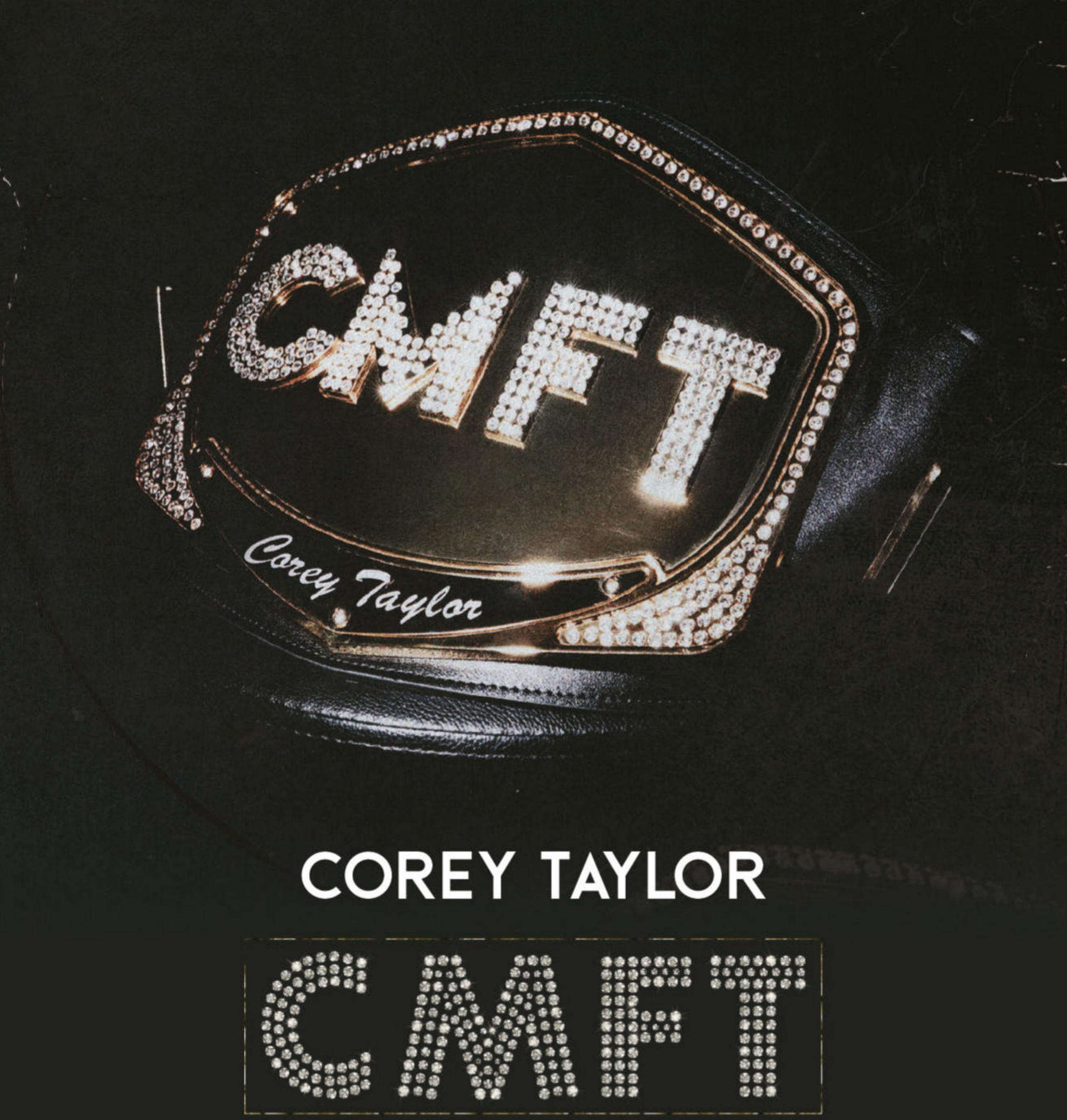
***Hammer*: Was any particular part of learning gutturals that was hard?**
"My technique changes from time to time, unfortunately. Like 10 years ago, it was really good. But then some days I forget how to do it and some days I kind of remember how to do it but then it comes out like absolutely different. Everything is fucking hard! I think the hardest thing is screaming."

What's your dream collaboration?
Aimee Perowne (email)
"Unfortunately, some of the musicians that I want to sing with are dead, but… I would love to sing with Chino Moreno from Deftones or Randy Blythe from Lamb Of God, Joe Duplantier from Gojira. And, oh, Mikael Åkerfeldt from Opeth. He should be in first place."

***Hammer*: Are there any non-metal collaborations you would consider?**
"Oh, yeah! I think P!nk, and I always wanted to sing with Gwen Stefani, but back when she was in No Doubt. It's kind of rock and… *everything*… so I don't consider it to be metal."

***Hammer*: Do you think the metal scene as it is would allow for non-metal collaborations?**
"I'm not a big fan of collaborations. You cannot be 'free' when you do one, it's either you invite someone to sing your song, or you are invited to sing their songs. In that song it's your voice, but it's your voice being controlled by them, [so] it's gonna be hard. I don't like the idea of collaborations unless it's really, really good and both people are giving their best and own visions to the song. Oh, another singer I would love to collaborate with is Maynard James Keenan from Tool. *Passenger* with Deftones, with the duet of Chino and Maynard, is perfect. You can recognise every one of them and they sing in their own way. But I don't like the idea of collaborations in general…"

***MACRO* IS OUT NOW VIA NAPALM**



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WORDS: STEPHEN HILL

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"***CHAOSPHERE* IS MY** favourite **MESHUGGAH** album. It's my go-to when I need to be geed-up. This song is so raw. I feel like this is Meshuggah's self-titled [Slipknot album]. It's that raw, angry energy. It sounds like everything's cranked.

Life Is Peachy is the best **KORN** album. Anyone who says otherwise is wrong – it's *so* sick. Like, the self-titled is really good, but I felt like they were still finding their groove. I actually got into them through *Follow The Leader*, so it took me a while to deep-dive and go back. I actually struggle to choose between *Life Is Peachy* and the self-titled Slipknot album, that's how much I love it. I think **BLOOD INCANTATION**'s *Hidden History Of The Human Race* is one of the most innovative death metal albums in the last five or six years at least. I think there's something really special about this band – it's one of the *hardest* death metal albums.

I came across **CONJURER** when [producer] Lewis Johns, who records all of our albums, sent us them to listen to. They opened for us in Birmingham and they were phenomenal – Gojira mixed with early Opeth. I think they're doing something very different with a dormant genre. I got into the more underground, Deathwish kinda stuff from Hevy Fest 2012, and **CONVERGE** were on that line-up. What I liked about that is that because I discovered them so late, I had this whole, amazing discography to go through. I know it's such a cliché to say *Jane Doe* is their best album but it just is; there's a reason that backpatch is one everyone's jackets. For me, *Broken Vow* is them at their gnarliest, and I just think it's so influential to everything else that came out around that time.

My Own Summer is an album opener for a reason. Is there a **DEFTONES** influence in Employed To Serve? There are little nuances that we definitely were inspired by them for. Things like snare sounds, any swervy, groovy bits we have are definitely a weird in-between of Pantera and Deftones. They're my favourite band. Everything they do is different.

HATEBREED are my favourite hardcore band. They're the first hardcore band I got into, when I was 14 and didn't even know hardcore was a thing. Because they dipped into the metal world quite a lot, I guess they're the token hardcore band you get into. I just really liked how positive all their lyrics were. Everything I listened to was really miserable, so I was like, 'This is really PMA!' When I was 16 I had this really shit Nokia phone, and I think I spent two days trying to get *I Will Be Heard* as my tone. I managed it!

WE NEVER LEARNED TO LIVE are another band I grew up with as a band – we played our first-ever Brighton show with them at the Hope & Ruin. I just remember thinking, 'This band is sick.' They're kinda like Hell Is For Heroes, Hopesfall mixed with Deftones. We've been really good friends with them, and it's been really nice to see their progression. I think it's some of the best songwriting from any young band.

There aren't many bands doing metalcore well, and **RENOUNCED** are doing it justice. Their tagline is 'Metalcore: Watch The Throne' and it definitely feels justified. It's almost like they've bookmarked a page in the early 2000s and released it in the present day.

I'd always been aware of **MALEVOLENCE** but never really deep-dived into their songs. They're just one of the most impressive UK bands I've ever seen live – I saw them at Download and I've never seen so much carnage. You're not *technically* supposed to incite moshpits, but they'd go into a breakdown and the whole room would part. They're really talented musicians as well."

"HATEBREED ARE METAL'S TOKEN HARDCORE BAND"

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PRESS

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LIFE LESSONS

ADRIAN SMITH

Iron Maiden's legendary guitarist shares the lessons he's learned from more than 40 years on the roads – and, er, rivers – around the world

WORDS: RICH HOBSON

IRON MAIDEN AXEMAN and songwriter since 1980 – aside from that brief break in the 90s – Adrian Smith has contributed more than a few chapters (and hits) to the band's four-decade-plus career. With their 2020 tour plans scuppered, he has found time to release his own book on fishing, with a few Maiden stories thrown in for good measure, of course. *Hammer* caught up with him for the angle.

I NEVER PLANNED ON WRITING A BOOK

"Somebody approached me to do it. They said, 'We know you're a keen fisherman and have lots of stories', so they set up meetings with publishers. But I really enjoy writing and it was all done over a year and a half, mostly written on the road. It was a great project: diving into my past, my fishing experiences and things that had happened with the band."

BEING SUCCESSFUL REQUIRES SOME SACRIFICE

"When I was about 15 I stopped going fishing for a while. I was having these conversations about what I was going to do with the rest of my life, around the same time as I got into music. I thought, 'If I'm going to make it as a musician I need to be dedicated', so stopped fishing and stopped following football; I'd also been a Man United fanatic. I remember saving up to get a Les Paul and thinking as soon as I'd got it I was going to sound like Gary Moore. But you've got to learn to play it first! I've still got that guitar, but I play it a bit better these days. Ironically, it wasn't until I joined Iron Maiden in the early 80s that I came back to fishing, mostly because that's one of the first things [ex-Maiden drummer] Clive Burr and I would talk about. We'd go out with [Maiden guitarist] Dave Murray while on tour, because by that point I figured I was on the way with music, it was time to revisit things I loved!"

SOMETIMES PARENTS JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND

"My parents weren't enthusiastic when I said I wanted to become a musician; they wanted me to stay on at school and get a good job. I can sympathise with it now, but back then my heroes had gone from being George Best and Bobby Charlton to Black Sabbath, Deep Purple and Free. I was knocked out when I heard those bands; I knew this was what I wanted to do. Like a lot of teenagers I had no idea what I wanted to do until it hit me between the eyes – I'd been a bit lost because I wasn't interested in the academic sides of school and not sports other than football. Even once I'd made my mind up, my parents were a bit concerned – 'It's all a bit pie in the sky mate, you'll never make a living out of it.' And, you know, for 98% of people they would be right. But things worked out, luckily."

BEING A ROCK FAN IN THE 70s WASN'T FASHIONABLE

"One of the stories in my book is about meeting Dave Murray; even back then he could play really well and had this distinctive sound. He was further along the road with playing guitar, so I told him I was a singer as I couldn't play anything at the time! I blagged my way into jamming with him and his mate, then we were growing our hair and donning the look, which was very strange back then because word hadn't really got around, so we just looked like this little cult!"

DEPRESSION HIT ME IN MAIDEN

"There aren't many angling books that deal with depression, so I felt a bit strange about including that. But we're all human and a lot of it comes down to how you deal with stress. I don't really want to come across as 'poor me', but it was a feature of the 80s for me. The last gig I did before joining Iron Maiden was at a pub in London; I remember getting on the bus with my wah-wah pedal in a Tesco bag, playing that show then the next thing was a massive gig with Iron Maiden. Quite the jump! I managed with sheer bravado to get through the first tour, then it started to hit me a bit – people pay a lot of money to see us and there's a lot of great musicians out there, meaning it's very competitive. It got on top of me a few times and when we hit America things really kicked in with booze and drugs, using it as a crutch. But you need to deal with those things, and knowing that now means I don't have the same struggles. It's all part of the process of growing up."

"I TOLD DAVE MURRAY I WAS A SINGER"

HAVING A HOBBY IS A GODSEND

"On the road, you find you've got a lot of time to kill and have to be ready at a moment's notice, so I usually keep a lot of stuff ready in my suitcase. It's something to do. Let's face it, touring can be really, really boring and I think that's why a lot of older bands get fed up with it. Don't get me wrong: the time spent onstage is great, but the other 22 hours a day you need to live your life. For me that means going out to do something I enjoy. It's good for your mind – as Billy Connolly said, 'Fishing is meditation with a punchline.'"

THERE'S NOTHING LIKE ESCAPING TO THE COUNTRY…

"Growing up in Clapton, East London, a lot of the waterways were so polluted you could smell them miles off. Going somewhere like Hertfordshire on a fishing trip was like being on holiday, and I loved that. The cocoon of plane-to-van-to-hotel is a bit much at times, so it's great to just go out into the country and free your mind, get that space."

…SO WE HAVE TO LOOK AFTER OUR COUNTRYSIDE

"I've been all round the world, but New Zealand is particularly amazing. It's incredibly beautiful and unspoiled, a bit like England back in the 40s or whatever, with crystal rivers and no litter. That's one of the things that really annoys me about this country, much as I love it: the rubbish people dump and the lack of respect for countryside really gets under my skin. Having said that, the rivers are a lot cleaner now than when I was a kid because they've tightened laws around industrial pollution and a lot of angling clubs organise work parties – groups of people giving their time to unblock rivers and the like. Some people get this idea of fishing as take-take-take, but most anglers with a soul will put

GETTY

Adrian's love of angling is
a far cry from Maiden mania

Adrian lets rip on *Run To The Gills*. Or is it *2 Minnows To Midnight*? Sorrynotsorry

"I HAD MY WAH-WAH PEDAL IN A TESCO BAG"

something back. If everybody did a little bit of that, then the world would be a better place."

IT'S AMAZING TO SEE MAIDEN FANS ALL OVER THE WORLD

"No matter where we go, we always see our merchandise around. A great thing about this band is that we go out and take the music to people, wherever that may take us. Doing that also means people stick with you. Having said that, I've walked by people in those shirts who had no idea who I was! I think our merchandise works a little *too* well like that. But one time I was out fishing in Ireland with my dad. Word had got out in the local village and these kids started turning up, all wearing Eddie shirts, watching us from the banks for a while. I went over and they asked if we could sign their things and, just as I did, two nuns walked up! They looked at the album, looked at me and thought it was *hilarious*."

MOTORCADES AREN'T AS GLAMOROUS AS THEY SEEM

"In places like Italy and Mexico, I've found the police escorts can be a little… enthusiastic. Too much so, you might say! People think it's glamorous getting this escort, but it can be very stressful, especially when you get a bit carsick and your driver thinks he's in an action movie, speeding through the night at 100mph with his sunglasses on!"

YOU NEVER KNOW WHO'S GOING TO BLOW UP

"Years ago we had bands like Saxon out with us – I never understood why they weren't massive as they were *great*. Ghost are a very interesting and different band. I appreciate if a band opens for us these days because it means they've worked very hard to get to that point – and Ghost have definitely got *something* going on."

THERE ARE ALWAYS BIGGER FISH TO FRY

"Even now, there's still a little bit of insecurity and wanting to prove things to people, do things we haven't before. It's like fishing – there's always bigger fish and new places to explore, always something to look forward to; it's what keeps me going. That and things like playing tennis with Steve Harris to keep me fit. I don't think any of us feel like slowing down – we still want to get out there!"

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IN THE STUDIO

PALM READER

The UK's shining stars of hardcore team up with Holy Roar for their most ambitious record yet

WORDS: RICH HOBSON • PICTURES: SAM LEES

Josh Mckeown: letting loose a Holy Roar on their fourth album

TEN YEARS, THREE records and more than 400 shows (including, in 2015, five in one day): it's fair to say Palm Reader have cemented their status as one of the brightest names in UK hardcore. Now partnered with Holy Roar, they have their sights set on flying ever higher on record number four…

The Instagram post you guys put up felt a little ominous – usually a band posting dates signals their end…
Andy Gillan (guitars): "I'd love to say that's planned but it wasn't until afterwards we realised – 'Oh yeah, looks like we're dead!' It's not 10 years since our first show, but it is 10 years since Posh [Josh Redrup, bassist] and Josh came up with the name at Hevy Fest, agreeing to form a band."
Josh Mckeown (vocals): "I told Posh our band name was going to be Palm Reader and he just said 'Wicked' and necked a beer. Afterwards we were walking round telling people we were in a band and nobody gave a fuck. I think they're just starting to now!"

How does the way you approach writing/recording differ now?
Josh: "The first two records were essentially just us playing at each other as loud as we could for extensive periods, remembering things through repetition. It was fucking horrible!"

THE FACTS
ALBUM: Four
STUDIO: Middle Farm Studios, Devon
PRODUCER: Lewis Johns
EXPECT: Intense hardcore emotion paired with colossal, world-conquering singalongs

Andy: "*Braille* was different – we all came together and the vast majority of the record was written in our house, taken to rehearsal and then built up from there. For this one, Josh and I spent a lot of time bouncing ideas back and forth. We ended up with about 14 solid song ideas – most of which got scrapped and raided for parts to make a more concise type of record."
Josh: "We were writing right up until we were in the studio. The writing of a song never really stops – even once it's been recorded, we find ourselves toning it up live."

What things inspired you, lyrically?
Josh: "This is the first time I've been lucky enough to not feel miserable in my own life, meaning I had to look outside my own perspective. Anything that comes out is going to sound like us; we don't do love songs and Beatles records, right? But I was putting myself in different mindsets and reaching out of that perspective. I don't think there's many benefits to just writing about yourself."

So what's on there?
Josh "One song is about a mother losing a child, based on someone we know. Another is about men finding it difficult to communicate, based on the overwhelming statistics about male suicide. It made me question that about myself: why haven't I ever put *myself* out there? It's something I feel needs to be communicated."

You've worked with *Braille* producer Lewis Johns again. What do you think you get from that partnership?
Andy: "We know what we're doing. It also means whenever we have an idea that hasn't worked, he can point that out: 'This doesn't work, it's shit.'"
Josh: "I've never known anyone stop Gillan in his tracks – except maybe his mum or girlfriend! Lewis is the band mum; this record drove home that we feel like a real family now."

What does the new record represent for Palm Reader?
Andy: "One thing we've always tried to do is take a step forward with each release. You do yourself a disservice just staying put and playing to a formula."
Josh: "The only criteria is to try something we haven't before. We still try to push past what we've done or what other bands might have done."

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THE STORY BEHIND

ROOSTER BY ALICE IN CHAINS

While holed up at Chris Cornell's place in early 1991, Jerry Cantrell began to think about his father's experiences in Vietnam. It would produce one of the decade's most emotional hits

WORDS: HENRY YATES

WHEN ALICE IN Chains guitarist Jerry Cantrell found himself temporarily homeless in early 1991, he turned to a fellow grunge legend for help. "I was between places to live at that time," Jerry reflects, "so I moved in with [Soundgarden singer] Chris Cornell and his wife, Susan Silver, at their house in Seattle. Susan was managing Alice In Chains at the time. I stayed there for a few weeks, up in this little room."

Sat up alone, late at night, "looking out at the fucking water", Jerry had time and space to reflect. Virtually every bandmember to pass through the Alice line-up, the guitarist once observed, was "a service brat from a military family". But on those long nights, Jerry's thoughts kept turning to his own estranged father, whose psychological scars following his tours of duty in Vietnam had caused the breakdown of the family while the guitarist was still in single digits.

"That experience in Vietnam changed him forever," Jerry considers, "and it certainly had an effect on our family, so I guess it was a defining moment in my life, too. He didn't walk out on us. We left him. It was an environment that wasn't good for anyone, so we took off to live with my grandmother in Washington, and that's where I went to school. I didn't have a lot of my father around, but I started thinking about him a lot during that period."

THE FACTS

RELEASED:
1992

ALBUM:
Dirt

PERSONNEL:
Layne Staley (vocals), Jerry Cantrell (guitar) Mike Starr (bass), Sean Kinney (drums)

HIGHEST CHART POSITION:
36 (UK)

Facing a four-track tape recorder, the song that poured out of Jerry might have been laced with bitterness at his soured childhood. Instead, *Rooster*'s harrowing lyrics were penned from the viewpoint of his father, evoking the 'stinging sweat' and 'mosquito death' of a trek through the jungle, and a vicarious skirmish with the Vietcong. The title of the song, meanwhile, was the nickname given to Cantrell Senior by his great-grandfather: "Apparently he was a cocky little kid, and his hair used to stick up on top of his head like a rooster's comb."

The writing process, the guitarist remembers, was more fruitful than any therapy session. "I certainly had resentments, as any young person does in a situation where a parent isn't around or a family is split. But on *Rooster*, I was trying to think about my father's side of it – what he might have gone through. To be honest, I didn't really sit down intending to do any of that, it just kinda came out. But that's the great thing about music – sometimes it can reach deeper than you ever would in a conversation with anybody. It's more of a forum to dig deeper."

As Jerry revealed in an interview with actor Dean Delray, *Rooster* unlocked a latent empathy for his father. "That song was me becoming a man and not putting it on him, imagining myself in his shoes and wondering if I could have done any better. And I realised that I couldn't say that I could have done better. I could have even fucking done worse. So, in writing that song, I stopped blaming him, and it was a bridge to actually taking an active part in trying to understand him and reach out to him."

By that point, Alice had enjoyed success with 1990's debut album, *Facelift*, and its standout single, *Man In The Box*. Yet *Rooster*, with its haunted atmospherics and fierce eloquence, was arguably the first song to announce the depth of the band's talent. Jerry recalls that "it felt like a major achievement for me as a young writer," and that enthusiasm was echoed when he played the demo to vocalist Layne Staley, bassist Mike Starr and drummer Sean Kinney.

WHEN IT CAME to recording *Rooster*, that line-up turned a prior engagement to their advantage. "The director Cameron Crowe had already come to us to ask for a song for his movie, *Singles*," recalls Jerry. "So, in the session that was meant for recording that one song [*Would?*], we ended up demoing about 10 songs, which included all the stuff that ended up on

GETTY

Fitting tribute: Jerry Cantrell (left) wrote *Rooster* for his Vietnam-vet absent father

the [1992] *Sap* EP, *Rooster* and a couple of others from *Dirt*."

While Jerry wrote in the notes to 1999's *Music Bank* box-set that "there was some vibe on the demo we didn't get on *Dirt*," the guitarist seemed satisfied with the official studio version of *Rooster*, noting that "this has something all of its own – quality, for one thing". Laid down at the Eldorado Studios on LA's Sunset Boulevard, the band worked on production with Dave Jerden. "It turned out to be really powerful," notes the guitarist, "and the way Layne sang on it is amazing."

As for the long-standing rumour that fellow Seattleites, Ann and Nancy Wilson of Heart, supplied the ghostly backing vocals at the start of *Rooster*, Jerry shakes his head: "I'd have to deny that. It wasn't them. They didn't sing on it. But during the demos we did for the *Singles* movie, Ann and Nancy did come down. They were on *Brother* and *Am I Inside*."

Visceral enough as a standalone song, the *Rooster* video only upped the ante, with director Mark Pellington (fresh from Pearl Jam's *Jeremy*) fusing the music with brutal scenes of combat, filmed in Angeles National Forest and overseen by the same technical advisor, Dale Dye, who worked on *Platoon*. Those scenes – including a graphic sequence where a soldier's lower leg is decimated by a landmine – led to an early ban by a squeamish MTV, but as an acolyte of classic war movies, Jerry wasn't about to pull his punches. "I was obsessed with *Apocalypse Now*," he told Delray, "and *Full Metal Jacket* was big for me, too."

"VIETNAM CHANGED MY FATHER FOREVER"

JERRY CANTRELL

Perhaps even more affecting was the video's opening interview with Cantrell Senior. For the guitarist – who had once been told, when asking about his father's experience in Vietnam, to "let it lie" – the footage was a revelation. "My father had never talked about that time in his life and was reluctant to do so if anyone ever asked. So I was amazed that he agreed to do Mark's request, for about an hour, on film. His involvement made the circle complete."

Jerry expanded on the experience in the sleevenotes for *Music Bank*.

Today, Jerry Cantrell still receives letters from soldiers serving abroad who love the song

"He was totally cool, totally calm and had a good time doing it. It even brought him to the point of tears. He said it was a weird experience, a sad experience and he hoped that nobody else ever had to go through it."

Released as a single in 1993, and climbing to No.7 on the US Mainstream Rock Tracks chart, *Rooster* drew immediate praise, both among the grunge faithful and those in military fatigues. "I've been all around the world," explains Jerry, "and I've talked to combat vets from Desert Storm and the war in Iraq – they have a deep affinity with that song. I got a letter from a guy in Iraq who told me his unit had changed their call sign to *Rooster*. Obviously, it's unfortunate that situation still exists, that guys still have to fight for political ends. But it's cool that people connect with that song, for it to be part of them getting through."

Despite a sentiment that struck a universal chord amongst combat vets, perhaps *Rooster*'s greatest triumph was a personal one, as against all odds, the song healed the strained relationship between father and son. "When I first played it to my father," remembers Jerry, "I asked him if I'd got close to where he might have been, emotionally or mentally, in that situation. And he told me, 'You got too close – you hit it on the head.' It meant a lot to him that I wrote it. It brought us closer. It was good for me in the long run, and it was good for him, too."

"HE HELD HIS HAT IN THE AIR. HE WAS CRYING THE WHOLE TIME"

JERRY CANTRELL

If final vindication were needed, it came at a 1992 show shortly after the release of *Dirt*, when Jerry spotted a familiar figure beyond the moshpit. "We were in this club opening for Iggy Pop," he told *Guitar For The Practising Musician*. "I'll never forget it. He was standing in the back and he heard all the words and stuff. And I remember when we played *Rooster*, he was back by the soundboard and I could see him. He was back there with his big, grey Stetson and his cowboy boots – he's a total Oklahoma man – and at the end, he took his hat off and just held it in the air. And he was crying the whole time. This song means a lot to me." H

LATEST ALICE IN CHAINS ALBUM, *RAINIER FOG*, IS OUT NOW VIA BMG

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GOOOJI IIIRRA AAAA!!

…And other loud noises and curious questions you threw at us this month

Gojira: henceforth known as *GOJJJJJIIIIRRRRAAAAAAA!*

ALL IN THE FAMILY

Can I just say it's so good to read that Metallica are on the same page and excited about a new album. I think we take them for granted and I'm happy that they don't have any plans to slow down yet! *Hardwired... To Self-Destruct* ruled!

One Happy Metallica Family Member (email)

Glad you enjoyed our last cover feature! While a new Metallica album isn't quite as close as we'd like, that the lads are at least moving forwards is happy days all round. Unless you hate Metallica. Which would make you a big silly.

ANGER MANAGEMENT

I noticed in your Metallica cover piece you seemed surprised that a *St. Anger* song would make it into the S&M2 setlist. Am I the only one that thinks *St. Anger* is Metallica's best post-00s album? Yes, the production leaves a lot to be desired but at least it was raw and adventurous. Surely that's what great metal is about?!

John Gurney (email)

Honestly we think you're off your tits with that one but at the very least we can definitely agree that the recent returns of *St. Anger*, *Frantic* and a tweaked *All Within My Hands* to Metallica's live shows has helped that album age a little better than many might suggest.

GOJIRA

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That is all.

Pips Smith (email)

Wait, is GOOOOOOOOOOJJJJJJIIIII IIIIIIRRRRRRRRRRAAAAAAA the new SSSSLLLAAAAAAYYYYEEEE EEEEEERRRRRRR? If so, we're in. All together now...

LEMMY AT 'EM

It's cool to see a different side of Lemmy like in your last issue. It's easy to forget that underneath these 'rock stars' are real people, and even Lemmy was a real-life human under the whiskey-drinking, bass-slinging legend we all knew and loved.

Toby Warris (email)

It's nice when Total Legends in the public eye turn out to be Total Legends in private as well, isn't it? God, we miss Lemmy.

'MON THE BIFF

I can't believe people are actually whining about Biffy Clyro playing Download! I think they're a brilliant band and they always bring it live. OK, sure: they're not Iron Maiden or Slipknot, but Download is a rock festival and Biffy rock! Deal with it!

Hayley Foy (Facebook)

Plus, if you don't like Biffy, you have Killswitch Engage and Sepultura to watch instead. That's... kinda... a good deal? We know where we'll be anyway (splitting ourselves in half so we can watch both).

'CKOFF THE BIFF

I don't care how many people try to convince me otherwise – sorry, but Biffy Clyro do not belong at Download. They just don't. Why not give Deftones that spot to headline? They deserve it more, especially after having been so close so many times.

Mick Wallis (Facebook)

Look, we're not all diehard Biffy fans over here, but they've played Download a ton of times and have written some pretty heavy stuff back in the day. We're cool with it.

That said, a Deftones headline set? Would watch.

#TWEETS

I read your groove metal article. I don't wanna be "that guy", but I'm honestly appalled that you didn't mention Grip Inc with Dave Lombardo. I first heard them from when BMG had a phone line and you could call and listen to samples of metal bands.
@J1sonofagun

When will people learn, it is a Lou Reed album and not a Metallica album, they're just the house band, hired musicians, backing band what ever you wanna call it. Lou Reed sings on it, get over it FFS.
@DrRock65

Why don't you ever tweet anything about THE CULT? Great rock and roll band.
@RudySteenackers

I love both bands and love Megadeth as much as Metallica, but let's face the truth: Hetfield has more charisma, better voice and controls the crowd better. But Dave is a better guitar player.
@Panigale_V4

And to think Todd Phillips (*The Hangover*, *Joker*, *Old School* and *Road Trip*) directed a documentary on GG Allin!
@cowriot

PRESS/TRAVIS SHINN

Backxwash: expanding horizons... and brains

GIGGEDY GO

Am I the only one that'd go see any gig right now? Fuck it: I'd watch a Black Veil Brides/Bring Me The Horizon co-headline set in a volcano if it meant I could get my mosh on. When are we gonna get our gigs back, *Metal Hammer*?!
Paul Rose (email)

To be honest, we could think of plenty worse gigs to go to than Black Veil Brides and Bring Me The Horizon. They both bring a show, and like you say, anything is better than nothing, right? Maybe not in a volcano, though. Sounds epic, but sweaty.

BACKXLASH

I hadn't heard Backxwash before seeing her in *Metal Hammer* and while rap is not usually my thing, the heaviness she brings has definitely got me interested. I dig it! Thank you *Metal Hammer*, for broadening this old mosher's brain a bit.
Alastair Mellings (Facebook)

Yeah, she's good, right?! Just one of the many exciting young artists bringing fresh things to the metal scene right now. And remember where you read about her first...

COREY MANIA

Why does Corey Taylor have a wrestling belt now? Does he think he's in WWE? Someone needs to tell him it's not real (though that would make him just a good a 'champion' as anyone else, I guess...)
Rob Hughes (email)

Don't be hating on WWE now or Editor Merl will be coming at you with an RKO (and no, we don't know what that means either, but apparently it's 'a proper badass move', so there you go).

THE BIG DEBATE

In our July issue, Editor Merl sparked some arguments with his piece on Limp Bizkit's *Chocolate Starfish And The Hot Dog Flavored Water* album. Some of you agreed it's a classic while others... did not.

HE SAID

"*Rollin'*, *My Generation*, *Take A Look Around*, *My Way*, *Hot Dog*, *Livin' It Up*, *Full Nelson*... that that list reads like a greatest hits set by itself tells you all you need to know about the kind of firepower that *Chocolate Starfish...* was packing."

YOU SAID

It is not a masterpiece! Jesus, couple of good songs... the hyperbole sometimes, *Hammer*, is ridiculous.
Andrew Sutherland (Facebook)

Glad someone else recognises how fun this album was. Party metal FTW!.
Domini Shilladoe (Facebook)

Significant Other is the game-changing album, *Chocolate*... was game-changing to the worse.
Hossam Gerees Saad (Facebook)

The reason for me liking Limp Bizkit back then is because I wasn't worried about the style they played, or who made it. It just sounded cool. Now I'm old and I feel obligated to be annoyed by LB. I'm not; LB is nostalgic for me, takes me back to more simpler times where I didn't need to battle haters online for not agreeing about how I felt about a certain band.
Sander De Vries (Facebook)

Great music but the vocal delivery and lyrical content was softer than laminated penguin shit.
Matt Storck (Facebook)

JOIN THE BIG DEBATE AT FACEBOOK.COM/METALHAMMERREADERS

HAMMER STEREO

What's been blowing our office speakers

POWER TRIP
Nightmare Logic
"Power Trip for fucking life."
MERLIN ALDERSLADE
EDITOR

DEFTONES
Ohms
"Like letting your brain run free in another dimension."
ELEANOR GOODMAN
DEPUTY EDITOR

ENSLAVED
Utgard
"Fearlessly elevating, a boundless wellspring of hope and wonder."
JONATHAN SELZER
REVIEWS EDITOR

ORBIT CULTURE
Nija
"Thanks to Steve Hill for the heads-up on p.31 – this is brutal brilliance!"
VANESSA THORPE
PRODUCTION EDITOR

BIFFY CLYRO
A Celebration Of Endings
"Fuck everybody. Fuck everybody. Woo!"
LOUISE BROCK
ART EDITOR

PRESS

NEW NOISE

CULT OF LILITH

Hailing Satan is so done. It's all about proto-feminist demoness worship. With death metal

WORDS: MATT MILLS

Cult of Lilith (left to right): Samúel Böðvarsson (bass), Kristján Júlíusson (guitar), Mario Ávalos (vocals), Kjartan Harðarson (drums), Daniel Hannesson (guitar)

IN ANCIENT HEBREW mythology, Lilith is the first wife of Adam, the original man. Moulded from the same clay as her husband, she lived with him in Paradise before, defiantly, leaving, refusing to be subservient to him. She then aligned herself with the fallen archangel Samael and became a mighty demoness, possessing an insidious control of the night and male sexual fantasies. Lilith is the proto-feminist – a figure originally intended to be a twisted villain but now revered by many as a self-sufficient antihero who gained power by rejecting patriarchy. She's a deity that Daniel Hannesson literally worships.

"I always wanted to make a cult of something," the Icelandic guitarist devilishly grins. "The holy image of a cult was always very interesting to me, being into horror movies and macabre things like that. I stumbled across Lilith and it just became very apparent to me that this is a goddess worthy of a cult of worshippers. In almost all religions and mythologies, there is some version of her."

Daniel and his four fellow cultists worship Lilith not through prayer or ritual sacrifice, but via the medium of technical death metal. Their debut album, *Mara*, is dedicated to the malicious provocateuse; it honours her with a barrage of athletic riffs and frenzied blastbeats, in line with the bygone extremism of Necrophagist and mid-era Death.

The mythical nature of Cult Of Lilith's subject matter is then hammered home by a number of head-turningly eclectic segues, utilising instruments as far-flung as the harpsichord and organ. Imagine the olden drama of Fleshgod Apocalypse fusing with the malevolence of Cattle Decapitation and you get the perfect portrait.

"There are so many things and musical ideas I want to try out," says Daniel. "That was the whole idea: why not bring everything together in one band? It's really challenging to use all these elements but still have a cohesive piece. I think that's what excites me: to challenge, musically, both the listener and us playing the music."

IN SHORT

SOUNDS LIKE:
A hyper-eclectic tech-death barrage; harpsichords and flamenco guitar have never been so metal

FOR FANS OF:
Fleshgod Apocalypse, Meshuggah, Cattle Decapitation

LISTEN TO:
Le Soupir Du Fantôme

AS A CHILD, Daniel was surrounded by classical instruments. His grandmother owned a piano and his uncle an acoustic guitar, both of which he was "messing around with" from as far back as he can remember. His guitar playing got increasingly serious as he was introduced to Nirvana and Rage Against The Machine, and later Sepultura and Dimmu Borgir, to the point where he finally felt ready to start a band all of his own. The minuscule population of his home country, however, made that feat inordinately tricky.

"I was just on this endless search to find musicians to work with," Daniel remembers. "It's hard, especially on a small island like this, to find people that are on the same page as you. I was getting ready to give up on the dream, but I decided as a last-ditch effort to make an EP by myself; I would make a showcase for musicians around Iceland to take note."

Using the Cult Of Lilith name he'd dreamt up long prior, Daniel recorded his EP, *Arkanum*, with a host of one-off session members. Featuring none of the guitarist's more classical influences, it was a more generic offering than *Mara*, but it drew the ears of vocalist Mario Ávalos, who'd just immigrated to Iceland from Spain.

"I didn't find it very interesting," the singer admits. "I came from another band that was very straight, melodic

death metal, and I was sick of it. At first, I said no, but when I heard the *Mara* demos, I wrote Daniel right away. I found it way more exciting!"

If *Arkanum* nailed the backbone of what Cult Of Lilith could sound like, then *Mara* is the complete corpus, jam-packed with character beyond the typical tech-death parameters. Not only have new instruments reared their heads, but Mario was able to add howling cleans to the mainstay growling.

Its lyrics, through a mix of English and Latin, are all centred upon Lilith herself, as well as the titular Mara: another demoness, this time found in Germanic and Scandinavian folklore, and who torments her victims with nightmares and sleep paralysis.

"Throughout the metal scene, it's a cliché for it to be a male-dominated thing," explains Daniel. "So, Lilith is rooted in everything we do. And then there's also Mara on this album."

"Everything is tainted with fantasy and related to Lilith, but the lyrics also deal with human emotion," Mario adds. "Deep down, everything is connected to Lilith somehow."

"I ALWAYS WANTED TO MAKE A CULT!"

Starting in late 2018, *Mara* took almost a year to record and was fraught with difficulty. The band were in the studio every weekend without fail for 10 months, and Daniel's perfectionism over what started as his own pet project often got the better of him. "Just getting the results exactly as we wanted it… it was hard," he sighs. "I wanted to be a part of the whole process; I felt I was missing out if I wasn't there while we were recording bass and the vocals. It was difficult, not being able to do anything else while we were doing this."

The mythology, technicality and originality of Cult Of Lilith's death metal has made it an incredibly time-consuming thing, but the band are already beginning to reap the rewards of their efforts. They've an envious deal with Metal Blade Records and an ever-increasing fanbase, meaning that Lilith's occult glorification is only just beginning…

***MARA* IS OUT NOW VIA METAL BLADE**

PRESS

NEW NOISE

WARGASM

Bouncing nu metal meets riotous punk courtesy of this explosive young duo

WORDS: YASMINE SUMMAN

TAKE SOME CATCHY nu metal riffs, throw in a bit of riot grrrl flare and wash it down with a healthy dosage of post-apocalyptic angst and you've got the cataclysmic but charismatic Wargasm. Joint forces of scene veteran and guitarist Sam Matlock and international model and bassist Milkie Way, the unstoppable pair dub themselves as "angry music for sad people" and are packed with nihilistic grooves that resonate with today's unpredictable times. "I don't know how people function in music without the punk ethos," says Sam. "'Wargasm' is the aggression of the war and the excitement of the 'gasm… it's a very powerful word!"

The duo formed their friendship through the underground music scene – Milkie's Girl In The Pit photography series brought her to a show with Matlock's old band and it spiralled into making songs on the toilet and teething through a pop-punk phase that Sam says is "buried in a hole on fire". They stress that genre won't limit them, adding that "every single track is an opportunity for rebirth." Wanting to fill a gap in the market, Wargasm is "finding a happy medium, but then making it mental," Milkie explains. "I love nu metal, I know there's loads of amazing woman in nu metal, like Amy Lee, but I wish there had been just a little bit more of something like me. I want to push that."

You might also remember this pair from their recent appearance on Download TV.

Streaming from Milkie's kitchen as they moshed out with her washing machine, they weren't sure what kind of response to expect but the comments had them both in stitches.

"You got people like, 'There's a girl in the kitchen!', which is ironic because I'm the one who does the fucking cooking!" Sam chuckles. "Even if they say they don't like us, they're still fucking saying your name," Milkie argues. "So everyone's like, 'Oh, who's this band that you hate? I'm gonna listen to them and see if I hate them as well'… and then, hopefully, they don't actually hate us. Ha ha ha!"

IN SHORT

SOUNDS LIKE:
If nu metal and riot grrrl had a weird but groovy punk baby

FOR FANS OF:
Linkin Park, Korn, Mindless Self Indulgence

LISTEN TO:
Spit

WARGARSM'S NEXT RELEASE IS EXPECTED SOON VIA LOCOMOTION

DUMA

From Kenya comes one of the most exciting grindcore bands of 2020

WORDS: TOM O' BOYLE

"WE'VE GOT A question for *you, Metal Hammer*: where the fuck have you been, man?!" laughs Duma vocalist Martin Khanja (AKA Lord Spikeheart), passionate about the depth and diversity of the Kenyan metal scene and frustrated that it's all too often overlooked. "The scene in Kenya is fucking serious, all kinds of genres – metalcore, death metal, grindcore, but no one knows about it, bro!" Martin spits, his words a machine-gun hail of enthusiasm, as fast as the hellacious breakcore of Duma's self-titled debut, over which his screams herald a new era of evolution for Kenyan metal. It sees the band combining traditional percussive influences with black/death/grind/industrial/you-name-it to create one of the most uniquely intense records you'll hear this year.

Producer Sam Karugu, a much more laidback counterpoint to his effusive frontman, is quick to agree that evolution is what this genre-bending two-piece are all about. "I want to show the world that metal is here, that we love it and that we want to change it – we want to make future music out of metal."

Martin's aspirations are equally far-sighted. "I want to unify all of us on the planet – all the diverse cultures; we're all family. No racism, no bullshit, I want to unify through music. At a metal show, if someone falls in the pit, you pick them up – you're one family. I love metal, it changed my life. Forget where you come from, we're one humankind, mankind – *that's* what's up."

IN SHORT

SOUNDS LIKE:
Breakcore with a uniquely Kenyan twist, by turns ambient noise and extreme sonic violence

FOR FANS OF:
Ho9909, Prurient, Napalm Death

LISTEN TO:
Lionsblood

***DUMA* IS OUT NOW**

WARGASM: PRESS/HARIS NUKEM. DUMA: CHRISMAN/PRESS.

ORBIT CULTURE

Niklas Karlsson's OCD was overwhelming him – so he used it to make one of 2020's most exciting albums

WORDS: STEPHEN HILL

IN SHORT

SOUNDS LIKE:
Epic, modern, groove-laden death metal with a wider cinematic scope

FOR FANS OF:
Gojira, Decapitated, Trivium

LISTEN TO:
Open Eye

"I SUFFER FROM really crippling obsessive compulsive disorder. It affects my everyday life continually, and it's taken a while for family and friends and my band to really be able to know how to deal with it," admits Orbit Culture guitarist and vocalist Niklas Karlsson. "It affects everything so much that it made sense to try and channel it into our music."

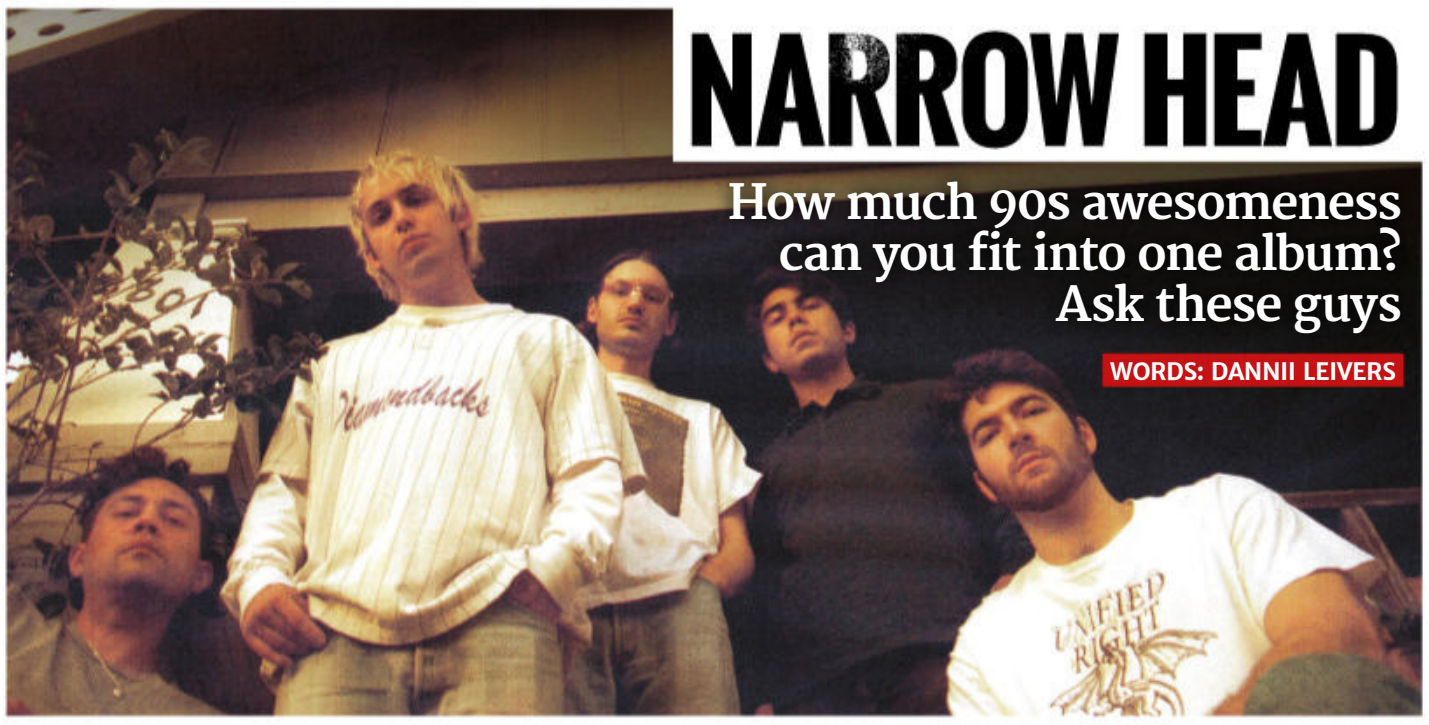
By making the choice to turn his OCD to his advantage, Niklas has inspired his band to write one of the most diversely exciting metal albums of the year. Orbit Culture's third album, *Nija*, is full of the kind of groove, muscle and pace that sounds like the results of Gojira, Metallica and Lamb Of God all getting in a rehearsal room together.

"Thematically, the record is kind of a metaphor for how my mind works when I'm really struggling to cope with the everyday world," Niklas continues. "So musically speaking, we wanted the album to reflect that chaos and be very varied. I listen to lots of different types of music and try to pull from everything."

This is certainly true: when asked which artists have inspired *Nija* the most, Niklas comes up with one very surprising namecheck.

"I mostly just listen to film scores now, so I'd say someone like Hans Zimmer, and the more grand and epic nature of his work, played a big part," says Niklas. "We're always going to be inspired by Gojira and we'll always be a metal band, but that's what really occupies my ears now."

***NIJA* IS OUT NOW VIA SEEK AND STRIKE**



NARROW HEAD

How much 90s awesomeness can you fit into one album? Ask these guys

WORDS: DANNII LEIVERS

IN SHORT

SOUNDS LIKE:
Everything that was brilliant about the 90s

FOR FANS OF:
Soundgarden, Helmet, My Bloody Valentine

LISTEN TO:
Night Tryst

COMBINING THE ANGULARITY of Helmet and Seattle grunge with Deftones-esque melody lines and a blizzard of My Bloody Valentine shoegaze, Narrow Head's sound is an arresting storm of 90s texture and tone. But it's taken a while for the Texans to cut through the noise.

"No one was paying attention to us," says vocalist and guitarist Jacob Duarte on why the band's second album, *12th House Rock*, which was recorded two years ago, is only getting its release now. "No one was really biting, so we were like, 'Fuck it, whatever. We'll keep going on tours.'"

That plan finally paid off when good friends and rising hardcore stars Vein invited them to join their 2019 UK run. While in London, Narrow Head met Employed To Serve vocalist and Holy Roar Records A&R Justine Jones, who went on to sign them to the label. With a bit of luck, having Holy Roar in their corner means many people will hear *12th House Rock*, and rightly so.

"I like our ability to write something pretty but still make it aggressive," says Jacob. "We rock harder than most hardcore bands. We're diverse and dynamic. The sound is very nostalgic but in the sense it's something fresh you've never heard before."

***12TH HOUSE ROCK* IS OUT NOW VIA HOLY ROAR**

NARROW HEAD: HOLMAN/JONÁS TEJEDA/PRESS. TERMINAL NATION: KURT LUNSFORD/PRESS

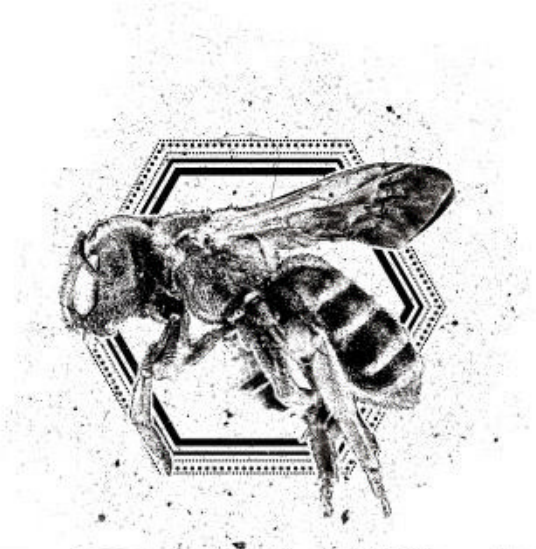
IN THE KNOW

What your favourite bands are listening to

TERMINAL NATION

"TERMINAL NATION are a pummelling hardcore act that come from Little Rock, Arkansas, and they just dropped their debut LP, *Holocene Extinction*, on 20 Buck Spin Records. It is a relentless, seething album, and it will fuck you up."

DEVIN HOLT, PALLBEARER



HOARD ALMIGHTY

Box sets, underground oddities and all the essential merch you need this month

BLACK SABBATH

PARANOID: 50TH ANNIVERSARY SUPER DELUXE BOX SET

BMG

£75/£100

THE ALBUM THAT starts with the *other* greatest and most ominous intro of all time reaches its 50th anniversary this year, and seeing as it still sounds like aeons-old DNA being woken from its slumber, the fact that it's manifested into two new forms should be another cause for celebration. Both the five-disc and the four-CD Super Deluxe Box Sets feature Black Sabbath's masterpiece as an original recording and the super-rare quad mix from 1974, folded down to stereo. You'll also find – released on vinyl for the first time – two live recordings from 1970: in Montreaux, just before *Paranoid* was released, and in Brussels. Both box sets come with extra gifts galore: a replica of the tour book from the Paranoid tour, a period poster and a stunningly designed hardback book stuffed with extensive liner notes, interviews with all the bandmembers, rare photos and various memorabilia. All of this might transport you back to 1970, but it's also the very definition of timeless.

https://wickedworld.net

FRIDAY THE 13TH BOARD GAME

£22.29

Grab some pals and gather around the dining room table for wine, nibbles and limb-cleaving, intestine-unspooling horror as you try to evade the psychopathic Jason Voorhees and survive five nights at Camp Crystal Lake.

https://tinyurl.com/slice-and-dice

YGGDRASIL PALE ALE

£30/CASE

Settle down with a crate of this Old Norse-themed tipple and things'll go one of two ways; you'll either feel splendidly connected to each of the nine worlds, or as shite as one-eyed Odin dangling from his gallows.

https://tinyurl.com/tree-beer

NEXT SKULL SPEAKER

£34.99

Are you in need a portable Bluetooth speaker to help rattle yer head when you're out and about? This classy number booms with the best of them and is in the shape of a SKULL. How can it fail?

https://tinyurl.com/next-skull

GHOST BACKPACK

£36.99

Before the absolute HUNK that is Cardinal Copia, Ghost's talismanic frontman bore the robes and name of Papa Emeritus. Give those behind you a history lesson whenever you wear this olde-style Papa backpack.

https://tinyurl.com/rats-pack

CAT SABBATH T-SHIRT

£19.99

Meow at the devil! Show how much you bloody love cats with Restyle's Cat Sabbath t-shirt, lest felines one day rule the world and use our mouths as litter trays (which they most certainly will).

https://tinyurl.com/cat-sabbath

LIK LONGSLEEVE

£21.90

Lik translates to 'corpse' in the death metal band's native Swedish, so it seems good and proper to feature a cadre of gooey, miffed-off skeletons on this fetching baseball-style longsleeve. The new album's a ripper, too.

https://tinyurl.com/lik-shirt

BAT FLOWER SEEDS

£7.90

If you want a truly evil windowbox then get your green fingers to growing some Tacca chantrieri. This gruesome bloom also likes to drink a lot and lurk in the shade – seriously, could it get any more heavy metal?

https://tinyurl.com/2020-triffids

JACK DANIEL'S WALLET

£20.99

Drink alone, in the safety of your own home, with this leathery little lad – complete your simulated night out by drunkenly ordering assorted meats and putting your debit card somewhere other than your wallet.

https://tinyurl.com/jd-wallet

OBITUARY HAT

£18.80

Never mind the fact that Obituary's ghoulish logo, printed here in bright pink, nullifies the purpose of this cap's camouflage pattern – nothing can camouflage that you have perfect music taste, anyway. Except a Doves t-shirt.

https://tinyurl.com/inked-inpink

LAMB OF GOD COFFEE

£15

Not content with hitting up Starbucks like the rest of us, the metal warriors of Lamb Of God – well, guitarist Willie Adler, to be specific – have teamed up with Nightflyer Roastworks to capture a very specific mouthfeel.

https://lambofgodcoffee.com

NEAERA ALBUM BUNDLE

£30.90

German melodeath band Neaera recently returned from one of those 'hiatus-but-not-really' hiatuses, and you can get your claws on their comeback album in box set form, replete with t-shirt, CD, sweatband pin and patch.

https://tinyurl.com/naera-bundle

THE INFERNAL TEA

£5.50

Quit being a poser and sup thy tea like you imbibe thy metal: black! This devilishly tasty brew is part of a range from Black Death-obsessives The Infernal Sea. Put your kettle on the boil!

https://tinyurl.com/brew-bonic

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COREY TAYLOR'S GUIDE TO BEING... HAPPY?

With a raucous new solo album that's a world away from the darkness of Slipknot, it seems that Corey Motherfucking Taylor has finally found contentment. But how?

WORDS: DANNII LEIVERS • PICTURES: ASHLEY OSBORN

COREY TAYLOR

You think you know Corey Taylor?

Sure you do. He's one of the biggest characters in our world. Metal's Great Big Mouth. The man who's spawned a thousand memes. For 20 years, he's told us exactly what he thinks… about everything. We've watched him take on the haters, rant about reality TV, and even knock Kanye West down a peg or two…

So when he announced his debut solo album, *CMFT*, we thought it was safe to assume it'd fall somewhere between the dark depths of Slipknot and the metal-tinged anthemia of his other gig, Stone Sour. On July 29, Corey released two singles to kick things off: the bright, melodic *Black Eyes Blue*, and hubristic cut *CMFT Must Be Stopped*. As the video for the latter hit the internet, shocked Maggots howled into the void. There were fire-breathing, leather-clad women. Ten-foot-high flashing letters spelling out his initials. Cameos from anyone who's anyone in metal, from Lars Ulrich, to Rob Halford, Babymetal and Manson. A verse each from hip hop artists Tech N9ne and Kid Bookie, and then Corey himself, bare chested, a championship wrestling belt across his shoulder, rapping over a swaggering bop that could soundtrack a bloody Royal Rumble. Understated it is not.

Online the debate raged, fans unable to decide if he had just entered an exciting new era or had just dropped the stinker of his career. Today, Corey hoots with laughter at the response. "All the pretentious people can't stand it. Or more to the point, people who hate fun," he says with a grin. "And all the people I thought were going to hate it, loved it. I love the fact I'm pissing in the face of the elitists."

You don't call your solo album *Corey Mother Fucking Taylor* unless a) you've got balls or b) you're looking for a reaction. In Corey's case, it's both. "It's basically me taking the piss out of my public persona and making fun of people who think they know exactly who the fuck I am," he declares. From the outset, he makes it clear this album is a reinvention: he wants to challenge our preconceptions of who Corey Taylor is.

Saying that, when he calls us today from his home in Las Vegas, a city he's

"I'M TAKING THE PISS"

COREY TAYLOR

Corey and pals (left to right): Zach Throne, Dustin Robert, Corey Taylor, Jason Christopher, Christian Martucci

18+

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THE MISFITS
I STILL SAY THEY STINK!
KISS

COREY TAYLOR

It seems the US has a more relaxed Highway Code than the UK

lived in for 12 years and that perfectly suits his larger-than-life personality, it takes about two minutes for his infamous soundbite syndrome to kick in. "It was wall-to-wall assholes," he says, recalling his wedding night with wife Alicia Dove, which he spent at the ARIA Casino on the Strip, a tourist hell he usually avoids like the plague. "I was like, 'God. I can't wait to just go home."

So far, so Corey, but the music comes as a surprise. When COVID-19 struck, while most people spent early lockdown overeating and watching *Tiger King*, Corey headed to The Hideout Studios on the outskirts of Vegas. There, his solo album was recorded, under strict social distancing, with producer Jay Ruston and a bunch of mates: guitarists Zach Throne and Stone Sour's Christian Martucci, drummer Dustin Robert and bassist Jason Christopher. Together, they've created an album that nods to the plug-in-and-go essence of rock'n'roll, with big choruses and uncomplicated, muscular bluster aimed straight at festival stages that makes nods to country and punk along the way.

"I didn't really have a clear vision [for the record] until I started putting the songs together," Corey says. "And by 'putting the songs together', I mean figuring out what we were going to put on the album, because some of these songs go all the way back. *Kansas* is about 15 years old. *Samantha's Gone* is 13 years old. I can remember writing the first two verses of *HWY 666* in 10th grade."

"I DIDN'T WANT TO FEEL LIKE I'D FAILED TWICE"

COREY TAYLOR

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Over the years, Corey had built up an arsenal of tracks that didn't quite fit with either Slipknot or Stone Sour, but surprisingly, he didn't seriously consider a full solo project until recently. "People kept asking me about it; it came up in every interview and with every fan that I talked to," he says. "For a while it was like, 'No, how greedy can you be? I've got two great bands. I get to do pretty much any guest appearance I fucking want. Then the more I thought about it, I thought, 'I've got all these songs that are really good. What am I going to do with them?'"

Between his Slipknot and Stone Sour commitments, Corey has always been too busy to dedicate time and energy to a solo project – but there's another reason why it's taken him so long to go it alone. Until recently, he simply wasn't in the right headspace. He'd spent years battling personal trauma. "I couldn't have made this album 10 years ago," he says grimly, "because I was right in the eye of the storm."

When we caught up with Corey last year, we found the beleaguered singer in fire-fighting mode. Slipknot were on the cusp of releasing their eagerly awaited sixth record, *We Are Not Your Kind*, but things inside the camp were looking decidedly turbulent following a period of change and instability. Founding member Chris 'Dicknose' Fehn had left the band under a cloud of animosity and, most tragically, percussionist Shawn 'Clown' Crahan's daughter Gabrielle had passed away, aged just 22.

Corey, too, was in bad shape. Not only was he recovering from double knee surgery, he was promoting a record that catalogued one of the most difficult times of his life. In 2017, he had spiralled into a deep depression following a bitter split from his second wife, Stephanie Luby, but due to touring commitments for Stone Sour's sixth album, *Hydrograd*, he hadn't had time to truly process it. To add to the emotional weight, just before the release of the album, Corey had appeared on US TV show *The Therapist*, where he opened up for the first time about being sexually assaulted as a child. Unsurprisingly, he had spent the Hydrograd tour "shell-shocked and trying to find out who the fuck I was".

When it came to recording *We Are Not Your Kind* with Slipknot in early 2019, Corey poured every drop of disillusionment, pain and anger following his divorce into the music, a catharsis he now describes "working through a sort of PTSD".

These guys certainly weren't lounging around during lockdown

"I LOVE THAT I'M PISSING IN THE FACE OF ELITISTS"

COREY TAYLOR

IT DON'T MEAN NOTHING (ACTUALLY, IT DOES)

Corey talks us through the tracks on debut solo album *CMFT*

HWY 666
"This started as two verses written in a notebook when I was about 16 years old. There's a little bit of Thin Lizzy, The Charlie Daniels Band and Pantera in there."

BLACK EYES BLUE
"For the longest time, this song was called 'Clash rip-off'. I just wanted to write something that cool, you know? I failed miserably but it's a great fucking song."

SAMANTHA'S GONE
"*Samantha's Gone* is probably one of my favourite songs I've ever written. It's what I call a 'junk food chorus', because there's no way that thing is not fattening."

MEINE LUX
"I dreamt this song before I wrote it. True story. I woke up, grabbed a guitar, filmed myself playing the song and sent it to the guys."

HALFWAY DOWN
"I've had this song for about 15 years. It's my homage to Bon Scott-era AC/DC, just that awesome, cool rock'n'roll in your face.

SILVERFISH
"This song is about those quiet moments fighting off those needles of addiction and depression when there's nothing else but your thoughts."

KANSAS
"It's about trying to get home to that person you love. I know if I can just get to Kansas, I'm one step away from being home."

CULTURE HEAD
"I was driving in my car and heard this machine doing the rhythm we mimicked with the drums. It's about being in the middle of the far right and extreme left, going, 'You're all full of shit.'"

EVERYBODY DIES ON MY BIRTHDAY
"We're all born and we all die. It's those two things we all have in common; it's everything in between that can be changed."

THE MARIA FIRE
"It's a personal song about my previous relationship, really digging in and giving a very heartfelt vaya con dios [a Spanish farewell that translates as 'Go with God']."

HOME
"This the first song I wrote about Alicia. I wrote it on the guitar but it lacked that intimacy and personal feel. So I spent two and half years teaching myself how to play piano."

CMFT MUST BE STOPPED (FEAT. TECH N9NE AND KID BOOKIE)
"It's a middle finger to everyone who thinks they know me, my homage to early 80s Run-DMC, and Bring The Noise with Anthrax and Public Enemy.

EUROPEAN TOUR BUS BATHROOM SONG
"There's the same sign in every bathroom on every European tour bus: please do not put paper in toilet, please use the bin provided. When you're trying not to get piss all over yourself, you tend to stare at this sign. If you do that long enough, you end up writing hardcore punk music to it."

Who is that masked man? Corey Taylor (third left) in his usual guise

"I've been reticent to go into too much detail about my prior relationship but it was really dark, really toxic and it ended badly," he says. "I decided to purge. I had to. I had to let everything out and not hold anything back. Because I was able to do that, I was able to give substance and weight to the way I was feeling, the things I had gone through, and all of these mental issues that came in the wake of that; I was able to really sort them out properly and put them down and move on."

Having weathered the storm, Corey can now talk about things with a sense of detachment. He admits he stayed in his previous relationship far too long, knowing he couldn't save it, but a stubbornness he now looks back on as "mid-western stoicism" prevented him from packing it in. "I didn't want to feel like I'd failed twice, even though it takes two to fuck something up," he says. "I didn't want to feel like I hadn't given it everything I could. The good thing that came out of that marriage is my daughter. That's one thing I can be thankful for from that relationship. Nothing else."

As painful as break-ups are, they are rarely a complete waste of time, and Corey admits it's been a learning process. "Sometimes you don't have to stick it out. Sometimes if your gut is telling you things are bad, listen to your gut. I ignored it for a while trying to do the right thing – whatever the fuck that is. Sometimes the 'right thing' isn't the right thing for you."

When it comes to music, Corey and the guys are genie-uses

"MY PRIOR RELATIONSHIP WAS DARK AND TOXIC"

COREY TAYLOR

It took a long time before he felt like himself again. He went to therapy, which helped him to identify and eradicate toxic presences in his life, including an addiction to social media. Back in 2017, Corey would frequently engage in conversation and arguments with random fans on Twitter, while plastering his private life across Instagram, sharing everything from gym selfies, to videos of himself cooking and his daily pilgrimage to Starbucks. Behind the veneer, though, he reveals he was actually seeking an escape.

"It was, for the longest time, my only source of solace," he says. "Because my personal life was so barren of appreciative feeling, the only place I felt I had any real contact with people was on social media."

It's now been a year since he used it, and it's been brilliant for his mental health. "It was one of the best things I could have done," he says. "I have a friend of mine who runs my Instagram and Twitter. I treat it like an extra layer of promotion now. I tell him to put stuff up, but I stay away from it and I don't read the comments. It's such a trigger for my addictive personality."

Speaking to Corey now, he is back to his usual, brash self; energetic, excitable and brimming with positivity for his life and new music. In October 2019, he married Alicia Dove, leader of dance troupe Cherry Bombs – the ladies who are breathing fire all over the *CMFT Must Be Stopped* video – who he began dating when the Bombs, along with Steel Panther, supported Stone Sour on their late 2017 US tour.

"There was an instant chemistry that popped but I was in such a gnarly spot that I wasn't ready to date anybody," he says, recalling the ▶

SLIPKNOT: PRESS/ALEXANDRIA CRAHAN CONWAY: STONE SOUR: PRESS/TRAVIS SHINN

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occasions he and Alicia had met prior to the tour. "It was hard to walk away from each other, but then fast-forward to the tour, when we saw each other it was just as strong as the last time we'd talked. The second we got around each other, people in the room could feel it. By the end of the tour we were together and we've been together ever since."

"I'VE LET GO OF THE NEGATIVE BULLSHIT"

COREY TAYLOR

Unequivocally, he credits the relationship as the reason for his current state of mind. Alicia attended Corey's therapy sessions with him and together the pair worked through his darkness, eventually emerging from the other side.

"She could be the most fun person I've ever known," he declares happily. "She smiles from the second she wakes up to the second we go to bed. We laugh constantly. When you have someone who is that excited about life, it's infectious. I realise that that's the way I used to be a long time ago, and having that reminder in your face reinvigorates the way you look at life."

Had COVID-19 not wiped clean the gig calendar for every band on the planet, at the time of writing this we would have been six days away from Slipknot's first-ever UK Knotfest. Instead, this is the longest Corey has been off the road in 20 years, although he admits he's wound up enjoying the break. "It's given me a chance to do exactly what I wished I could be doing while I was on the road. I've been able to spend really good time with my kids," he says.

He and Alicia have finally had time to move properly into their Vegas home, which has been full of unpacked boxes since their wedding last year, while Corey has relished the chance to hang out with his son Griff and even attend a school dance recital with his youngest daughter Ryan, as Nevada's COVID restrictions eased over the summer. "Obviously I'm not a dancer but we had so much fun," he smiles. "We had a good time and we were able to get a video of it and we watch it all the time."

Constant touring has had its repercussions, though. As the topic of conversation turns to his children, and his eldest daughter Angeline, Corey's cavalier facade fades.

Corey is loving his new lease of life

"She and I aren't really close," he says quietly. "I don't want to say we had a falling out, but we just kind of drifted apart a few years ago. I wasn't there when she was born. She was born early on and I was already at work when that was going on. With Griff it's different, though. I was there from day one. As well as with Ryan."

When he speaks again, the sadness in his voice is palpable. "It's difficult. It's a tough thing to deal with, but all you can focus on are the ones you have, the ones that are right there, and hope that the other one is doing OK." He pauses. "I definitely miss her."

Still, Corey is holding on to the positives. Having spent most of his life battling some degree of depression or addiction, he's now been sober for 10 years. Having been through the ringer in the last few years, he has finally reached a happy place, and you can hear that in the new music. "My whole mindset has changed," he says. "Before I was so full of piss and vinegar and angry about shit, I would crack off about everything. I really started to go, 'Who gives a shit? Does it really matter?"

Does he mean the salad days of ranting about the Kardashians and "inferior music" are over? "It doesn't mean I'm not still a prick about it," he laughs, and just for a moment, the curmudgeon of old raises its head. "But I've let go of the energy it takes to be angry about it. To me, at the end of the day if someone's happy, then good. There's way too many things that we should be fighting and trying to make better, and way too many things that are trying to tear us apart. If there's a handful of things that make you happy then who am I to fucking question it? And because I've let go of a lot of that negative bullshit, it's made me happy too."

There's little evidence of old baggage on *CMFT*. In a back catalogue that spends most of its time raking back over past regrets, this is the first time Corey has looked forward to the future, his vision clear and unclouded by demons that have been a constant presence in his life until now. "I re-evaluated my focus on my priorities," he says. "I've been able to reconnect with friends. Dedicated myself to being part of my kids' lives. My marriage. Going through what I did, made me appreciate what I have. Letting go of the weight of all that shit, I was able to transfer this positive energy and excitement into these songs. It's almost like a new lease of life."

BOX WORDS: ELEANOR GOODMAN. KID BOOKIE: PRESS.

***CMFT* IS OUT ON OCTOBER 2 VIA ROADRUNNER**

"SOMEBODY KICK MY NUTSACK HARD AS HELL!"

Excited to work with his hero for a second time, Kid Bookie rapped on the single *CMFT Must Be Stopped*

HOW DID YOU GET INTO SLIPKNOT?
"In Year 6, my dad bought me this Slipknot biography. It showed me about [producer] Ross Robinson, Clown's basement, *everything*. I was like 10, 11, *consumed* by fucking rock music, man. Slipknot was one of the catalysts that opened me to not just metal, but even pop punk and shit. I'm 28, so that's 18, 17 years I've been sitting here as a Maggot."

YOU FIRST COLLABORATED WITH HIM ON YOUR SONG *STUCK IN MY WAYS*. HOW DID THAT COME ABOUT?
"I had a job at this vegan place called Temple Of Seitan. I'd had a shitty day and was coming home from work, and I was listening to *Wait And Bleed*, and I was like, 'You know what? Let me go on Twitter, and let me just say to Corey, 'Yo, before I leave this Earth, I wanna work with you.' And then 20 minutes later, dude hit me up and was like, 'Yeah, let's talk, man.' And I was like, 'What? Somebody kick my nutsack hard as hell, because this is not real!' And then nobody did it, so it was fucking real. Within a week or two, we had a new song."

HOW DID YOU GET FROM THERE TO *CMFT MUST BE STOPPED*?
"We kept really close, man. We still speak weekly, and I see him when I can. The song idea was definitely around six months *prior* to being recorded. But there was no physical audio yet. We just had the idea that it was gonna be a *different* kind of record. If you hear of Kid Bookie and Corey Taylor on a song, you think it's just gonna be this *speedball* of heavy, dark, dropped D riffs and like 'Arghhhh!'. But then I guess around about two months ago, I got a message saying, 'Yo, by the way, Tech N9ne's on this song.' And I was like, 'Corey, you crazy motherfucker.'"

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU THAT HE EMBRACES DIFFERENT GENRES?
"You don't really get that over here. You get acknowledgement through Drake and shit when you're doing your drill and hip hop, but when you're trying to fight for your niche and win over rock fans... you know what metal elitists are like. No shade, I'm a metalhead myself, I know *exactly* what I'm talking about, because I fucking hated hip hop growing up, so I know what it's like to have to understand sonics and not be so naive to the beauty of sound. It's just dope to be able to be on that fucking song with Corey and Tech. To be able to set the precedent is great."

YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT THAT IN YOUR RAP AS WELL, RIGHT?
"I guess, yeah. In hip hop today when you've got 'kid' in your name, it seems like you're just gonna go [raps something about 'fucking a bitch']. Instantly, I think the judgement's there. But when you really delve into my shit, you can see how much I've studied the crux of music, the elements of rock, the rap styles. If you're gonna put me on this platform to speak, then I'm gonna have to wave my fucking big motherfucking finger around and say kind of, 'Fuck you', because we are in a time where I don't wanna see a separation [because of] genre."

RILEY GALE WAS ONE OF US

It's why his death last month at the age of 34 shocked the metal scene, and left us grieving for a man who embodied the very best that heavy music has to offer

WORDS: MERLIN ALDERSLADE • PICTURES: WILL IRELAND

When news broke in the late hours of August 25 that Riley Gale had passed away, you only needed a quick glance at 'Metal Twitter' to understand how beloved the Power Trip singer was in our world. Yes, there were plenty of tributes to how brilliant a frontman he was. His unmistakable, rasping bellow was the focal point around which Power Trip's buzzsaw thrash attack could flow; his effortless command of a crowd made him a formidable presence onstage. But it was the tributes to the man, not the musician, that stood tallest that night. Almost immediately, personal anecdotes from friends, fans and peers began flooding social media – you couldn't move for tales of Riley's generosity, his empathy and his love for the scene that bore him.

Because Riley Gale was one of us. He represented everything that metal should aspire to be: fearless, uncompromising, sure, but also accepting, unprejudiced, open-minded and full-hearted. He refused to let his band be co-opted by arseholes – "If someone is wearing a Power Trip shirt, you can probably assume that that person isn't some weird, racist, meathead piece of shit" he famously told *Revolver* – and he was unafraid to wear his beliefs on his sleeve. He wanted metal to be a safe space for everybody, and would always go out of his way to make that possible for those around him.

Growing up in the suburbs of Dallas, Texas, in an Irish Catholic household, Riley's discovery of heavy music took a little while to properly get going – "my parents' house wasn't a musical home at all", he'd tell *Hammer*. He was a "little shit" in school who'd "bump back against everything", though he would later come to appreciate his education, which would eventually take him to a bachelor's degree in technical writing – a course that taught him that "every word matters".

It was music, though, that was his true calling. While he kept a soft spot for the Motown and old soul songs that'd sometimes get played on the radio, it was punk rock that ignited his interest, courtesy of a cousin who introduced him to the rosters of hallmark labels like Epitaph and Fat Wreck Chords. Soon, he began attending every rock gig in and around his hometown that he could possibly find. "When I was getting into music in the first couple of years of high school, I wanted to see everything," he recalled. "I would see metal, hardcore, punk, whatever."

Riley was as warm and down to earth as he was talented

"WHEN I GOT INTO MUSIC, I WANTED TO SEE *EVERYTHING*"

RILEY GALE

It was in the hardcore scene that Riley found the most kinship, providing a sense of camaraderie that informed the way he would engage with rock music for the rest of his career. "It was much more inviting," he recalled. "Everyone knew each other." That camaraderie would serve him well when, after an early run with a local punk band, Riley put the message out that he wanted to form something a little different – a crossover band that would appeal to metalheads and hardcore kids alike. Local guitarist Blake Ibanez caught wind and got in touch, and the two began jamming together. Soon, the line-up would fill out, some gigs would be played and, courtesy of a 2008 demo, Power Trip would officially be born.

It'd take a while for the metal world at large to catch on. Following a couple of EPs (later repackaged as a collection titled *Opening Fire*) and a shit-hot debut album in 2013's *Manifest Decimation*, Power Trip would spend a few more years bouncing across metal tours around the States, steadily but surely gaining new fans right across rock's vast spectrum. For Riley, it was simple: there was no crowd he and his bandmates couldn't win over.

"For years I've always said, 'Put us in a room with people who like heavy music, and the worst thing they'll say is that we didn't suck,'" he told us. "People didn't know who the fuck we were, but we went out there and played, and we won a lot of fans. Because we're not just heavy: we're catchy!"

Leading the pandemonium

In early 2016, things started to hit fifth gear. A North American tour with US metal heavyweights Lamb Of God, thrash legends Anthrax and post-black metallers Deafheaven would see Power Trip play to some of the biggest and most varied crowds of their career so far. It was what Riley later described as a "breakthrough tour": a chance to appeal to metal fans across a whole range of tastes. Power Trip were starting to gain a serious reputation as one of *the* best live bands in heavy music, powered by Riley's intense charisma and riotous stage patter. He'd dress onstage exactly the same as he dressed off it – baseball cap, longsleeve and jeans or shorts, looking equal parts everyman and rock star – the kind of guy who'd crack a joke that'd have everyone chuckling before causing absolute pandemonium as he spun his mic stand, launched spin kicks and flung himself into the front row.

"I still don't think I'm a confident frontman," he would say later. "I just try to have fun and be myself. When I'm in places where I feel like I have a lot more 'friends in the room', it can be a relaxing thing. It's not confidence, it's comfort."

As Power Trip's status on the metal underground grew, they needed a record to help them firmly break into metal's wider consciousness. That album was 2017's *Nightmare Logic*: a pure, unadulterated explosion of seething thrash metal, guttural hardcore and deftly woven hooks that'd sneak up on you and bury themselves deep inside your skull. It landed high in the end-of-year polls across rock media, even being voted into the Top 10 albums of 2017 by *Metal Hammer* readers. Its breakout song, *Executioner's Tax (Swing Of The Axe)*, became one of the year's standout metal anthems, showcasing the band's uncanny knack for music that could be both brutalisingly heavy and catchier than a cold, as well as Riley's skilfull ability to dissect real-world issues through a philosophical lens… while still making it all sound metal as *fuck*.

"It sounds like it's just a catchy song about swinging an axe around, but really it's about us finding comfort in death," he later noted. "We will gladly, in a capitalist society, pay to numb that existential pain of death, whether it be drugs, food, television, booze, gambling, sex, whatever. We pay the executioner's tax to feel better about the fact that all of this is for nothing."

Riley's world views would often spill into his interviews – during our times together conversations that'd start about music would inevitably end up spiralling out to cover US politics, gun ownership, economics and social issues. He was a man who believed in progressive values, but also understood the importance of engaging with different viewpoints, famously appearing on Fox News personality Greg Gutfeld's podcast after Power Trip's music was played during a segment on his show.

As Power Trip's profile grew, so did Riley's reputation as one of the most legitimate and approachable guys in all of metal. He looked out for the musicians he shared the road with and he cared deeply about the scene in general and the health it was in. During his interview for our 2018 cover feature celebrating an upcoming, *Hammer*-sponsored tour featuring Power Trip alongside Trivium, Code Orange and Venom Prison, he expressed his concerns at young bands being unable to produce an income that made their music sustainable.

DOWNLOAD 2019: KEVIN NIXON.

Riley Gale: left us far too soon

"LIVE YOUR LIFE THE WAY YOU WANT TO"

RILEY GALE

"Metal is at a very big tipping point," he told us. "I think we're at a big sink or swim moment, and people have to decide: do they want to support the music that's out there? Because you have to understand that if you want to keep seeing our bands over these next years, you have to put money into it somehow. There are so many of us, and the hype cycle is so fast."

There were more big moments for Power Trip through 2018 and 2019, not least day-stealing sets on the main stages of Download and Bloodstock, the UK's premier rock festivals. 2020, too, was set to be a banner year; fans were hopeful for a new album, while a blockbuster planned tour with Lamb Of God and Kreator was one of the most hyped metal events of the whole year.

Of course, it wasn't to be. COVID-19 stopped the world in its tracks, and we now know that we'll never get to see Riley tear up a stage again. His presence at shows will be missed keenly, but beyond that, it feels like we've lost a real positive force in the metal scene: a man who stood for empathy, critical thinking and being unafraid to upset the status quo. He was also a man who had an answer for everything. Even death itself.

"Death doesn't hit me very hard," he mused. "I internalise it a lot. I think that when you die, you die. You have your borrowed time, and no amount of grieving is gonna bring anyone back. That's really negative sounding, but it's not negative; it's actually very freeing to think about! You got this life, go for whatever you wanna go for. There are so many people in this world, and everything moves so fast. You might as well just live your life the way you want to."

POWER TRIP HAVE ENCOURAGED FANS TO DONATE TO DALLAS HOPE CHARITIES VIA WWW.DALLASHOPECHARITIES.ORG

THE WORLD PAYS TRIBUTE

What the metal scene has had to say about Riley Gale

"I was really looking forward to touring with him and Power Trip again. Besides being a great frontman, Riley was smart, articulate, well read, politically astute, compassionate and fearless in expressing his views. These are all things I value highly in an artist and a human being. We got along really well."
Randy Blythe, Lamb Of God

"I only had the good fortune of meeting him once, but he had a way of making you feel like you had known him forever, instantly. Such a profound loss. Love and deepest sympathies to Power Trip and everyone close to him."
Jay Weinberg, Slipknot

"We were able to chat about comics, games and food – often – and you fronted a band that had the world excited like no other. You will be greatly missed. Rest In Peace, Riley."
Matt Heafy, Trivium

"I only hung with him a few times in person but I got to know him more from internet interactions. Was just a kindred spirit. We appreciated and saw things in a lot of similar ways. Going to miss knowing he was out there fighting the good fight. Rest in power and love."
Brian Fair, Shadows Fall/Hell Night

"We are in complete shock. Riley and the Power Trip family have always been welcoming and kind to us, from day one. Our community lost genuinely one of the nicest, most fun-loving souls [we] have ever encountered."
Harm's Way

"Very sad to hear about Riley. Saw them open for Cannibal Corpse and they were fucking awesome. Sending positive energy to the bandmembers and his family."
Robb Flynn, Machine Head

"Rest in peace, Riley. You made a huge dent in heavy music history that will last forever. Our deepest condolences to his friends, family and the guys in Power Trip."
Code Orange

"To a great frontman and an even greater friend. Every time Rotting Out played Texas, you took care of us and always showed us love! Condolences to your family/friends/fans. We love you, Riley."
Rotting Out

"One of my favourite bands of all time. Rest in fucking power, Riley."
Caleb Shomo, Beartooth

"Rest In Power to a true legend, Riley Gale. An inspiration to all of us. Life won't be the same without you. We will never forget. Out hearts go out to the Power Trip family."
Knocked Loose

"I still can't believe my friend is gone. It's so fucking sad. We'll miss you, Riley."
Ice T, Body Count

"He was a real man of the people, like the mayor of friendship. He seemed to have millions of friends everywhere he went. Someone that brought people together. A real well of charisma. Thinking of the sheer number of folks who are saddened right now... our hearts go out to the Power Trip guys and their families."
Trevor Strnad, The Black Dahlia Murder

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BLACK SABBATH

OH, LORD YEAH!

Paranoid took Black Sabbath into the big leagues and sealed their legacy as heavy metal pioneers. On its 50th birthday, we celebrate every extraordinary track

WORDS: MALCOLM DOME

GETTY

The unexpected success of Black Sabbath's self-titled debut album meant the band were back in the studio working on their second record just four months after its release on February 13, 1970. And like its predecessor, it was done very quickly. However, when issued on September 18 that year, *Paranoid* not only propelled the band to even bigger success, but also gave them a more mainstream acknowledgement, thanks to the title track's Top Five achievement as a single. This second album refined the musical blueprint of the debut, taking the music to new heights. Alongside Deep Purple and Led Zeppelin, Sabbath were now regarded as true heavy pioneers.

WAR PIGS

This song dates back to a couple of years before it was recorded. "We used to play multiple sets every night at clubs in Switzerland, and jammed a lot to take up time," recalls Tony Iommi. "That's where the idea for *War Pigs* came from."

Originally called 'Walpurgis', it's claimed this song's title was altered because Vertigo, the band's label, were concerned with the Satanic connotations. In reality, though, Walpurgis refers to Walpurgis Night, which is on April 30 and a celebration of eighth-century abbess Saint Walpurga, renowned as a healer and for her stand *against* witchcraft.

Lyrically, *War Pigs* attacks those such as politicians who lyricist Geezer Butler saw as the true evil in society, sending millions to fight, and die, in wars like Vietnam. Musically, it develops from a proto-doom opening, before blossoming – on the back of a remarkable Tony Iommi performance and Ozzy's harrowing, commanding vocals – into a masterpiece. "The siren you hear on the track was producer Rodger Bain's idea," recalls Tom Allom, engineer on the recording sessions. "He may have gotten it from a sound

"SOLDIERS HAD BECOME JUNKIES – THEY WERE IN A STATE"

GEEZER BUTLER

Geezer Butler at Regent Sounds. He wrote the song *Paranoid* about depression, which was groundbreaking in 1970

Geezer and Tony: hands of doom

Tony Iommi, Ozzy Osbourne, Geezer Butler and Bill Ward in 1970. Super-stardom beckons

GETTY

effects album. Rodger also had the brainwave to speed up the music at the end of the track."

Incidentally, that instrumental outro was titled *Luke's Wall* on US versions of the album, as they needed extra tracks on the release.

PARANOID

Talk about fortuitous! This song, originally called 'The Paranoid', only exists because the band needed to fill a three-minute gap on the album. "We went to the pub, and left Tony in the studio trying to come up with a suitable riff," says Tom. "Later he came running over the road and told us, 'I've got it, I've got it.'"

The song is about depression, and lyricist Geezer should be applauded for talking about it openly, in an era when the subject was regarded as taboo. Although interestingly, the word 'paranoid' never appears in the lyrics. "When you smoke a lot of dope as I was doing back then, you get paranoid around people. And afterwards you can become depressed," he admitted.

Released as a single in August 1970, this was Sabbath's biggest UK hit, reaching No.4. Musically, it has an instantly recognisable melody that's a counterpoint to the lyrical despair. And, of course, it became the album's title track – originally planned to be *War Pigs*, but switched because the label believed that song's anti-war rhetoric was too contentious.

PLANET CARAVAN

This is a jazzy psychedelic excursion, which is appropriate because, as Geezer says, "The song's about floating through space with your loved one." It's definitely a metaphorical acid trip. "I seem to remember the band made this up as they went along in the studio," says Tom. "I played the piano you hear at the end. I had the idea that adding some piano chords would work, so went and did it."

But contrary to what some sources say, Tony Iommi does *not* play the flute on this track. "What people may wrongly interpret as being a flute is the sound we got from using a tone generator," explains Tom. "This was Rodger's suggestion – he loved doing that sort of thing."

Ozzy's slightly eerie vocals were created at Island Studios in London. "That's where we did all the vocals," outlines Tom. "I believe we used a Leslie speaker here, which allows you to modify sounds. There was one lying around at the studio, and that gave us the inspiration for altering Ozzy's voice."

The *Paranoid* sessions at Regent Sounds– June 17, 1970

IRON MAN

While Black Sabbath usually haunt the dark corridors of horror, on this track they take a science fiction approach. The lyrics, written by Geezer, are about someone travelling into the future and witnessing the apocalypse. On returning to his own time, he is unwittingly transformed into a metallic being, and all his attempts to warn humanity about what faces them are met with mockery. In an act of revenge, he causes the apocalypse he'd previously seen.

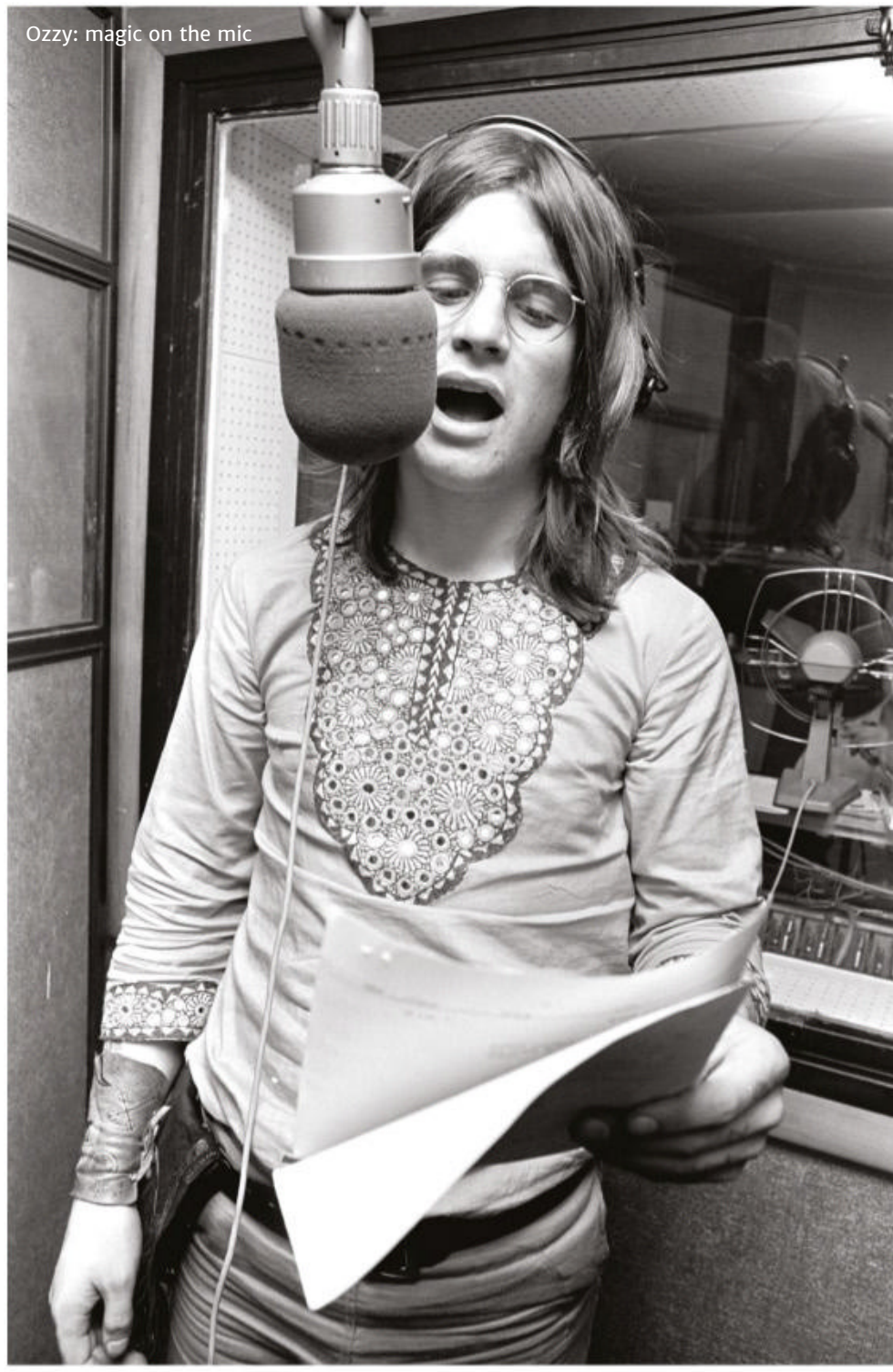
"The vocal growl you hear from Ozzy at the start came from putting his voice through a ring modulator," explains Tom. This was a device used a lot for vocal effects; for instance, it was how the Dalek voices were created for *Doctor Who*!

The title came from Ozzy, as Geezer explains: "He said something like, 'Why don't we do a song called Iron Man, or maybe Iron Bloke?' That got me thinking about a lump of metal, and then putting it into a science fiction tale."

The bassist believes this track represents the best of Sabbath: "With *Iron Man*, what you're getting is the essence of what made Black Sabbath such a special band. It's fairly simple, yet also has a lot of depth."

ELECTRIC FUNERAL

In some respects, *Electric Funeral* is a companion piece to *Iron Man*. The second and final part of what is effectively a science fiction suite within the album, it deals with the devastation caused by a nuclear holocaust. The track is remarkably progressive, with both Tony and drummer Bill Ward delivering complex performances. It opens and closes



Ozzy: magic on the mic

on a droning momentum, with a more uptempo middle section. And Ozzy's baritone intonation of the songtitle in a recurring chant towards the conclusion is unnerving.

HAND OF DOOM

Like *War Pigs*, *Hand Of Doom* references the ongoing Vietnam war, but lyrically it focuses on the way many American soldiers became drug addicts in order to survive the horrors of that situation. "We played a couple of US army bases in England. There were soldiers in a dreadful state, because they'd become junkies," recalls Geezer, who wrote the lyrics. "And they were on their way home from Vietnam."

Hand Of Doom is a seven-minute epic, with a lot of emphasis on the bassline. "I always loved doing this song live," says Geezer. "Because I was so involved in what it was about musically."

"SKINHEADS BEAT THE HELL OUT OF US"

GEEZER BUTLER

RAT SALAD

An instrumental based around a solo from Bill Ward. There's a jazz-style swing to it, and Geezer recalls that the track has its roots in the band's early European club tours. "We played very long sets, and Bill would do a 45-minute drum solo to fill up time."

In 1971, the bassist said the songtitle was a reference to the drummer's unkempt hairstyle rather than any noxious culinary dish. However, more recently, he seems to have forgotten this. "I can't recall how we came up with this title," he says today. Ah well.

FAIRIES WEAR BOOTS

The instrumental opening was titled *Jack The Stripper* on original US pressings of the album. It provides a smooth transition into the song itself, which is surprisingly supple given the lyrical narrative. Geezer says Ozzy wrote the lyrics for *Fairies Wear Boots* after the band encountered a skinhead gang: "It was when Sabbath did a gig in Weston-super-Mare. After the show, these skinheads beat the hell out of us."

But in another story about the lyrical inspiration, it's claimed Geezer and Ozzy once got so high on cannabis, they saw fairies in boots frolicking in a park. Trivia hounds may be intrigued that the line *'alright now'* in this song is echoed at the start of *Sweet Leaf*, on next album *Masters Of Reality*, which is *definitely* about cannabis. Maybe a hint as to the true origin of *Fairies Wear Boots*?

THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY 5LP/4CD *PARANOID: SUPER DELUXE EDITION* IS OUT ON OCTOBER 9, VIA BMG

GETTY

DEFTONES

DEFTONES COME

HAVE HOME

Returning to the last place they made music with Chi Cheng, Deftones also reunited with the producer who knows them best. It's all resulted in their most personal album yet

WORDS: ELEANOR GOODMAN

PRESS/TAMAR LEVINE

Walking into their Sacramento rehearsal space, to work there for the first time since bassist Chi Cheng passed away, Deftones frontman Chino Moreno felt heavy.

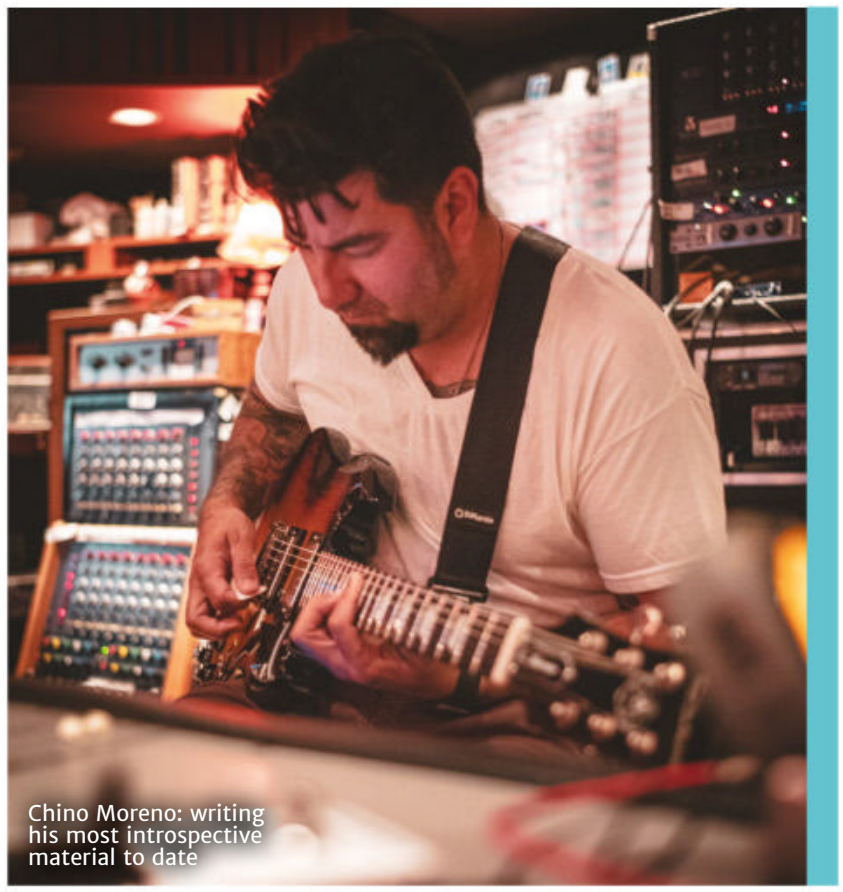
"We all had our own little stations in the studio, and Chi's station was exactly how he'd left it, with his Tibetan flag hanging up and all his gear," he says. "We had these dry-erase boards with some of the old songs we were working on written on them. It was like walking into a time capsule – it was a trip."

They had last been at 'The Spot' in 2008, making what should have been their sixth album, *Eros*, but abandoned the material and the building after Chi was in a car accident, leaving him with injuries from which he would never recover. When it was time to start work on new album *Ohms*, the band decided to revamp the area, and assembled for a week of cleaning, carpeting, painting and bringing in new furnishings. It held profoundly personal memories for each of them, of all-nighters spent playing music, skating on the inbuilt halfpipe and sleeping in the lofts. There were great times, and times spent living on the edge. Chino went to his own room and purged boxes of stuff that "had old memories tied to it that I didn't want".

"I was opening up these boxes of old clothes and electronics. A lot of it was stuff that maybe someone would have wanted, or I could have given away to the Goodwill. But… it made so much sense throwing it away," he admits. "And I know that sounds terrible, but I was letting all this stuff go. I had this feeling of starting over again, at least in that space. It made it feel vibrant again."

"Oh man, it felt good being around everyone in that space again where we did a lot of growing up," smiles turntablist Frank Delgado. "We had to clean it and bring it back to life. We're always talking about Chi, and I think that's maybe why we avoided it for so long, but in all honesty, it's a positive thing."

Deftones, and in particular Chino, have been honouring the past, clearing out the old, and making way for the new. Today he is speaking to us from his new home in Portland, Oregon. Right now, a guy is getting the fireplaces in working order ahead of the winter, and tomorrow some trees will be removed from the yard. More than just bricks, mortar and grass, the property represents a decision to change his life for the better – more on that later.



Chino Moreno: writing his most introspective material to date

Abe Cunningham: Deftones' subtle drumming ninja

When it comes to the band, there's no doubt that *Ohms* is a triumph. Nine album releases in, Chino's otherworldly vocals echo off and melt into Stephen Carpenter's savage riffs, which attack without warning, alongside Sergio Vega's equally brutal basslines. Meanwhile, Frank's electronics shade in the gaps with an 80s, space-age feel. It's all underpinned by Abe Cunningham's distinctive rhythms that remain subtle until you notice them – and then you *really* notice them. When we ask Chino if he was aiming for a particular vibe on this record, he's quick to highlight this palpable unity, following the much-documented creative disconnect between Stephen and the rest of the band on 2016's *Gore*.

"I definitely wanted a stronger sense of everybody being represented on the record," he explains. "I think it's been pretty out there as far as Stephen's contribution to *Gore*, where he was physically present when we wrote the music, yet he wasn't as involved as we would have liked him to be. So at the end of the day, we had a record that maybe wasn't as balanced. I think that was a learning experience, and after the record was finished, Stephen came to me and we spoke deeply about it."

You can hear Chino's quiet pride for *Ohms*, as he continues: "The main goal on this record was to have everybody heard and equally on the same sort of level. And so, that ended up happening. That was the greatest part about it."

If going back to The Spot was a homecoming, so was returning to Terry Date. He produced Deftones' first four albums (1995's *Adrenaline*, 1997's *Around The Fur*, 2000's *White Pony* and 2003's *Deftones*), plus 2008's ill-fated *Eros*. The band had always wanted to reunite with him someday, and when his name cropped up for *Ohms*, Terry was happy to oblige. "I'd never hesitate to go in with them, because it's like working with brothers," he says.

"Being with Terry made it nostalgic," reveals Frank. "It's very comfortable. Terry knows what will work. If someone is hammering something they are trying to accomplish, Terry knows how long he'll allow that to happen. He knows when Abe's gonna blow a fuse, he knows how long to let Stef vent for, he knows *those* little things, which makes a great environment to be in."

'Comfortable' is the word Chino uses, too. Paradoxically, being comfortable with Terry allows him the freedom to

"CHI'S STATION WAS EXACTLY AS HE'D LEFT IT"

CHINO MORENO

On the edge of your seat waiting for the new album? So were the guys

get *out* of his comfort zone. If he knows he's being supported unconditionally, he can express himself fully and experiment without fear.

"With him, especially when I'm working on melodies or vocal ideas, I feel really open to trying different things, even if they're bad," he explains. "I don't feel like he's gonna judge me or push me in any direction, but more or less let me try until I fail, and then try again until I get it, and help me not get frustrated with the process. I feel like that's very important to be in that sort of headspace when you're trying to come up with things, especially after our 10th record of making music with the same dudes. It gets harder every time, but I think it's supposed to."

Why does it get harder? Shouldn't it get easier each time?

"If we honestly were to follow some of the formulas that we've stumbled upon, it wouldn't be that hard. Writing and formatting a song is not hard. But you're trying not to fall into those formulas and repeat yourself," he explains. "When you hear a Deftones song, you can tell it's us, but the idea is to expand on what we've done in the past, so that can be challenging."

Some of the more rogue elements on *Ohms* include the soft cry of seagulls on *Pompeji*, and those aforementioned 80s synths that hover over the record like a dramatic, retro-futuristic haze. Following initial sessions at The Spot, the band moved to Los Angeles to continue writing and begin recording, before Chino laid down vocals and Frank added textures at Terry's home studio in Seattle. This is where much of the formula-dodging magic happened.

"The writing part is really the most nerve-wracking part, but once you know you have the foundation of the song, all the other stuff is like colouring in, so that's the fun part," Chino enthuses. "It's like buying a house and then having the freedom to just decorate it any way you want."

Frank Delgado, recruited as a Deftones member proper on 2000's *White Pony*, still has the air of someone who can't believe he managed to land his dream job. When we ask him a series of questions about how he dreamt up such distinctive soundscapes for *Ohms*, he's at a loss, so we tell him his working methods sound mysterious. "Well, shit! Yeah, I'm still trying to figure it out myself," he laughs. "I think it's just

PRESS/FRANK DELGADO

seeing what happens when we get together. Trying to capture lightning in a bottle, I guess you could say."

Both are relieved there was no pressure. By finishing *Ohms* at Terry's, they avoided the burden of expensive studio costs mounting up. Frank stayed over, while Chino would make the three-hour drive up from Portland.

"I'd get in his house at noon, and we'd work until 6 o'clock, then go out and get some beers, and come back and maybe watch a basketball game or whatever, then work a bit more, and I'd go home. And then the same thing the next day," recalls Chino. "There was a good working experience, when you don't have that idea of, 'I've just gotta get that done so I can move on with my life.'"

The experience also provided some much-needed artistic and social nourishment for Chino, who has spent a chunk of his 40s in a state of unease.

Seven years ago, Chino left LA for the small city of Bend, Oregon. As well as recording and touring with Deftones, he'd been immersed in Team Sleep, Crosses, Palms and various other side-projects during his time there. He'd been prolific – perhaps *too* prolific – and desperately needed to restore his equilibrium.

"My life at the time was so hectic," he remembers. "I wanted a good balance of being somewhere where, when I got off tour and came home, I could completely decompress and wind down. So it was nice. For the first few years, maybe…"

Bend, a former logging town with a population of 105,000 – compared with LA's four million – is best known for outdoor sports, and boasts the last remaining Blockbuster video rental store. At first, Chino enjoyed the solitude, but then it started to wear on him. He had few local friends, and would sometimes make the three-hour trip north to Portland to jam with his longtime buddy and collaborator Chuck Doom, but was unable to get in a room with Deftones unless they were on tour. As that longing for company grew, so too did his dissatisfaction with daily life, and he turned to therapy.

"I got to a point where I was feeling very isolated and lonely, and I've spent a *lot* of time by myself over the last few years being out there, and not making music, not being creative," he says. "Whether I was riding my bike or out snowboarding – which are all things I like to do – I was doing those things all by myself. So I was just always by myself. If anybody had seen me out anywhere, I was by myself. Everything at home was pretty good, it wasn't like I was going through anything crazy, but I was trying to figure out, 'Why am I sort of slightly depressed? I live in a beautiful place, I have a job, and a healthy family and whatever… why am I so agitated?'"

He had previously considered having therapy, but couldn't bring himself to go. After all, he had his wife, his family, his friends and his bandmates – he speaks to Abe almost every day on the phone. The difference, he found, was that with a stranger he could be brutally honest.

"I didn't want to do it for a long time. I *wanted* to do it, but I was maybe afraid to do it. And then once I did it, it was just like, 'Man, why didn't I do this a long time ago? And then why is there a stigma attached to this, if there is one? Or why did *I* think there was a stigma attached to it.' Like, if you go to talk to somebody, that you're mentally unstable. It's like admitting that you have a problem or something, you know what I mean?" he says. "Honestly, I think it's one of those

Deftones (left to right): Stephen Carpenter, Abe Cunningham, Frank Delgado, Chino Moreno, Sergio Vega

PRESS/FRANK MADDOCKS

things where you don't even need to have a problem, but it's just a healthy thing to do. Even me talking to you now, it just feels good to let things out and express them sometimes. And I wasn't doing that for a while."

Ask 47-year-old Chino what he gets from being in a group like Deftones, and he boils it down. "The easy, simple answer is happiness, and camaraderie," he smiles. COVID-19 might have thrown his plans for greater connection into disarray, but at least in 2020 he feels more able to cope.

"It's good to know that I have friends that I can share everyday conversations with, that I still enjoy the company of, and that's probably the hardest part about what's going on right now. Before the pandemic I was feeling isolated away from them, and now, it's like it's back to

"I WAS AFRAID TO DO THERAPY"

CHINO MORENO

As Chino came to understand himself more, he made some adjustments – one of which was moving to Portland and civilisation. After renting in Lake Oswego for a year to test out the location, he's now the owner of a new place. "Moving here was like, 'I can be close to the city, I can go to see shows, basketball games, go out and have some kind of nightlife, and feel like I'm human again."

that," he says. "But I'm obviously not alone with this, because everyone's in the same boat right now as far as isolation. So I wouldn't say I'm used to it, but I feel like I deal with it better now than I was even before the pandemic."

Chino's journey, in all its emotional complexity, is reflected in *Ohms*' bombastic opener, *Genesis*. Rippling with Frank's beginning-of-the-universe atmospherics, it erupts into being with a stunner of a riff from Stef, as Chino defiantly screams: *'I reject both sides of what I'm being told!'* His thoughts evolve amid swirls of heaviness, and by the end he's screaming: *'Oh can you taste your life... balanced? / How will you spend your time... reborn?'*

"When writing it, I don't think I was aware per se," he explains. "The first lyrics are pretty scathing, and it's more about being frustrated with everything, but as the song develops itself you kind of realise this metamorphosis – going through something and coming out. It's cool when that happens. I'm just scribbling down words that fit with the melodies that are there, or the cadence in my vocals, and then they completely reveal themselves to make sense of something exactly that I'm dealing with."

In fact, *Ohms* is his most introspective record yet, and Deftones' most hopeful. Chino's lyrics have long remained abstract, evoking moods rather than divulging personal details; *Adrenaline* featured formless wails, while *White Pony* presented dramatic, fictional narratives. When he did turn inwards on their self-titled record, he was "very manic and in a super-dark place". This time, there's an openness. This time, there's a sense he can see where he is.

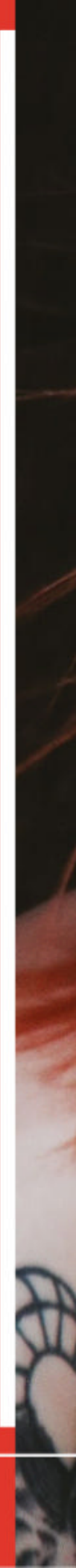
"Now I feel like my vision is a lot clearer," he says. "It doesn't mean that there's still not trials and tribulations that most humans deal with on a day-to-day basis, but I feel like there is a lot more light in it. Even if it trudges through the darkness, it seems like it comes out in the light. But yeah, it feels human to me."

***OHMS* IS OUT ON SEPTEMBER 25 VIA WARNERS. TURN TO P.86 FOR OUR REVIEW**

Serena Cherry has faced down depression, misogyny and even *Metal Hammer*'s Facebook warriors. With the release of Svalbard's third album, she has seven simple words:

I'M NOT GOING TO TAKE THIS ANYMORE

WORDS: DANNII LEIVERS



JORDAN MIDDLETON

In 2019, Svalbard singer Serena Cherry was hit by a black cloud so thick and all-encompassing, she couldn't see a way out. She had watched people close to her battle depression, and had endured sporadic visits from the black dog herself in the past. But nothing like this.

She stopped eating – "I physically couldn't get that pleasure anymore" – and encountered fits of uncontrollable crying, describing the period as the toughest of her life. "I got out of an abusive relationship, which is what [the band's recent single] *Open Wound* is about," she says. "It's a really grey area and you have so many conflicting emotions when you're in love with someone who hurts you."

Svalbard's destructive third record, *When I Die, Will I Get Better?* isn't specifically about Serena's depression but, given she wrote the lyrics in the eye of the storm, it's unmistakeably "tainted" by it. Raw, unedited and often crushing, while it was clearly cathartic to write and record, it's an uncomfortable listen, as is any album that offers a glimpse into another person's emotional rock bottom.

Musically, it sees Svalbard developing their blisteringly emotional and progressive take on blackened post-rock and evolving into a band with a masterful handle on noise and texture, with a visceral social/political conscience. It's a logical next step from the band's second album, 2018's *It's Hard To Have Hope*, which set the Bristol-based quartet apart from everything else that was happening in metal at the time as they noisily tackled the left-field topics no one else was talking about: revenge porn, unpaid internships and abortion rights. By the end of that cycle, Serena had emerged as one of metal's most incendiary lyricists and voices.

Come 2019, emotional turbulence had turned Serena's life upside down. But even at her lowest ebb, she continued to use her social media platform to promote women's rights, while writing blogs and think pieces that blasted sexist marketing and pornogrind.

"The more outspoken I've got, the more shit I've got on the internet," she reveals, although it started long before that. "It's always been simmering away over time. Being a teenager working in a guitar shop and guys not wanting to be served by me, or playing my first gig and people coming up and giving awful comments about 'Being good for a girl'… it all builds up to this little voice that says, 'No, I'm not going to take this anymore.'"

Serena's vented some of that anger on the new album. *What Was She Wearing?* tackles the issue of women being judged for how they dress, while *The Currency Of Beauty* rages about women being reduced to their physical appearance. She even fires a shot at *Metal Hammer – Click Bait* is a visceral squall intended as a response to an article published on our website in February 2019. Titled *Metal's most interesting voices are all female – and it's about time*, it ended up attracting more than a thousand Facebook comments, mostly disparaging howls from butt-hurt men. "I understand that the intentions were good. [But] where is the line between celebrating and fetishising?" she asks when we bring this up. "As soon as it becomes about lumping women together… that's when it becomes tricky."

In October 2019, Serena found herself in the eye of another social media storm. Having come across comments from Download organiser and Live Nation boss Andy Copping in 2015 that women "seem to like watching bands more than being in them," Serena Tweeted a mock example of what a Download line-up would look like if every single band had a woman in it. The Tweet blew up, provoking further discussion about representation of women in metal and pushing her once again into the firing line of the internet. This time though, Serena feels her words have become a real driver for change.

"On the Download [2021] line-up getting announced today, half the bands that were on that bill that I made are on there," she says. "If you look at that poster, they have made a concerted effort to have more women on the bill, which is fantastic."

"I GOT OUT OF AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP"

SERENA CHERRY

By the end of 2019, Serena had started a PhD, writing a thesis on women in metal. But at the time, she was still working through her depression. "It was a paid position but the catch was, you had to move to Milton Keynes to do it," she explains. "I felt really isolated when I was there and I think I'm just incredibly disillusioned with higher education. Everything was about obscuring the point rather than making it as clear as possible."

Loud and proud: Serena – and Svalbard – won't take your shit anymore

After five months she quit and moved back to Bristol; at the time, she felt like a failure. Looking back now, she feels it wasn't a wasted experience. "It wiped away that feeling, when you're in your 30s, that you should be doing something real, legitimate and grown up. So you do a PhD, or try to get a promotion because it's what you feel you should be doing at that age. Then you realise it's not for you and that's fine."

That sense of self-acceptance defines where Serena is today. Sitting in her home surrounded by guitars and eating a pack of Chocolate Buttons, the singer is clearly in a better place. Recovery,

she says, has been a slow process. So slight, she barely realised it was happening. Her appetite has returned, she's taken up jiujitsu – a contact sport she's missing terribly in the age of COVID – and has found happiness in a new relationship. "[Our publicist] Becky Laverty said, 'There's going to be a day where you, for no reason, feel like you again,'" Serena smiles. "A couple of months ago, it happened. There was no big moment or movie-style reveal, something just came back."

That shift is mirrored in ethereal album closer *Pearlescent*, a track Serena describes as, "the light at the end of the tunnel". "The album is very much a tunnel of depression," she says. "But I've taken that darkness and turned it into something creative. Now, rather than revisiting the pain every time we play these songs, it's empowering. *Pearlescent* is about meeting my partner who I'm with now, and finding that light and that hope you thought you wouldn't be able to feel again."

She smiles. "What is it Trent Reznor says? The way out is through."

***WHEN I DIE, WILL I GET BETTER?* IS OUT ON SEPTEMBER 25 VIA HOLY ROAR**

TIM BIRKBECK

THE BLACK ALBUM

Serena talks us through her progressive black metal solo side-project, *Noctule*

SO, WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO WRITE A SOLO ALBUM?
"I used to be in a black metal band before I was in Svalbard and it's probably more my musical leaning, more my musical taste. During lockdown, I felt a surge of inspiration and I finally had loads more time to play guitar. *Noctule* is the result of what poured out of me during all those weeks in isolation. It felt amazing to truly immerse myself in writing black metal this year and weirdly, without the horrendous situation of COVID-19, I wouldn't have had the chance to do this. So, *Noctule* is a bit of a silver lining in the struggles of 2020. I've nearly finished the record and it will be coming out next year, hopefully."

DOES THIS SCRATCH AN ITCH YOU CAN'T GET WITH SVALBARD?
"I get to be fully in control of the music in *Noctule*; I don't have to compromise on my ideas. It's extremely self-indulgent! Ha ha ha! But also, I get to explore more poetic avenues – more sorrowful vocals, more complex guitar leads. *Noctule* gives me complete creative freedom to try anything I want to try."

WHAT KIND OF THINGS ARE YOU WRITING ABOUT?
"Unlike Svalbard, *Noctule* is not a topical band at all. The songs are more imaginative, poetic attempts to capture dark atmospheres and express melancholic emotions. I view it as the soundtrack to the darker places inside my head. Much like the works of [French poet] Charles Baudelaire, there is a fixation on death, decay and sorrow in these songs. Before I record vocals for *Noctule*, I read a couple of Charles Baudelaire poems, write what they've made me feel, and then I go in my wardrobe to record vocals so I don't terrify my housemates."

THE DARK WORLD

Fed up of the world being a shitshow? So are Enslaved. New album *Utgard* is about journeying into the realms of the unconscious instead, to rediscover yourself and your commonality with others

WORDS: JONATHAN SELZER • PICTURES: ROY BJØRGE

In a world with all its bearings intact, Enslaved would have played the Fire In The Mountains festival this July just past. Set on a ranch in the vast Wyoming wilderness, it's one of those events that binds environment and community into a bigger whole, the workshops and talks that were to take place alongside the live sets all guiding the attendees to rekindle rhythms too easily abandoned to our skittish, modern consciousness.

Ivar Bjørnson, Enslaved guitarist and, along with frontman Grutle Kjellson, founder member of a band whose musical and philosophical horizons are ever expanding, is taking the long view: "We've been around for almost 30 years, so what's another decade?" he laughs.

"They had this incredible non-music programme," he continues from his Bergen home. "We were looking into Grutle doing a fishing workshop in the nearby rivers, and there would be people nearby farming. The festival had a good connection with the Native American community around there, which was also involved. My friend Jonas Lorentzen, who did the wolf howls on Heilung's live DVD, had looked at some Utgard myths, and put together a plan for cooking in accordance with food mentioned in the mythologies. It was a complete thing going on."

That notion of finding resonances far from home, of deepening your own roots by seeing them in relation to other cultures, is a theme that runs throughout Enslaved's latest and 15th album, *Utgard*. Named after one of the nine realms in Norse cosmology and the mythical, chaotic and primordial home of the Norse Jotun giants, it's a journey into a metaphor-rich heart of darkness, but with all the grace, flint-edged determination and billowing, progressive wanderlust that's made every album a celebratory step into the breach, transmuting their blackened beginnings into a kaleidoscopic quest for knowledge.

If there is a centre point for *Utgard*, it's one of the two lead singles, *Homebound*. Like the rest of the album, it's streamlined, still masterfully seguing between moods as characteristically driving riffs open out into the most hopeful of swells, but with a renewed focus after the multi-layered predecessors, *In Times* and *E*. It's a song of rebirth and journeying within (*'Unmoving we travel / Crossing oceans in mythological dreams'*), in thrall to its own transitional state.

Enslaved (left to right): Ice Dale, Håkon Vinje, Grutle Kjellson, Ivar Bjørnson, Iver Sandøy

"A lot of the things we are dealing with on this album relate to the concept of travelling, exploring and experiencing yourself in new settings," says Ivar. "The more rooted you are in your own history, the easier it is to relate to others around the world. Of course, when we made the album, we didn't expect COVID-19 to hit, but it's been made really clear how necessary it is to travel, to see connections and parallels with how people are shaped by their environment. Whether it's urban or the vast mountains of Wyoming, it's important to connect."

Making those connections isn't just an act of mutual goodwill. For Enslaved, it comes with an understanding that our histories and mythologies are reservoirs of ancestral knowledge and ongoing dialogues, both with other cultures and ourselves, and whose relevance remains undimmed.

"Mythologies are histories of the psyche of people in a certain geographical area," says Ivar. "Seeing the similarities, and how these archetypes seem to be a common denominator, is comforting. But even though we have this common humanity, we still choose to do such vastly different things. I don't want to call myself disillusioned, but I think this album is describing coming through a storm. I don't want to spend time pointing out how people are misusing the human condition, but focus on enjoying our own

communities and expanding upon that, making our world a good place to be."

The wider movement that Enslaved have found themselves a part of – the elemental retuning of Wardruna, Heilung, Neurosis and others – feels like a response to our cultural micro-managed war of attrition: our constant, reactive checking of news and social feeds that doesn't offer the opportunity for self-reflection so much as place you in a hall of mirrors, unable to gauge a genuine centre. As Ivar explains, in order to find ourselves, we need to look for something more enduring.

"'Sacred' is a word some people have a problem with because it has religious connotations, but I think we have a need for it, something that is 'other'. That 'otherness' is within all of us, and that's part of what we are exploring on *Utgard*. Yes, Utgard is a reflection of the shadow world within us all, but it's not necessarily all evil and dark and horrible. It's unknown, it's alien, strange, but a lot of the time that's where you find creativity and humour. What sometimes seems to be the 'dark places' aren't necessarily bad places, but they do demand a certain courage to go there. Part of the experience is seeing the layers of yourself, beneath the immediate. A lot of the things that [make us] think, 'This is me, this is my values'… much of it is just imitations of expectations around us."

"DARK PLACES AREN'T ALL BAD"

IVAR BJØRNSON

What is the personal necessity, and the cost, of entering these spaces?

"It is uncomfortable, and I think that's one of the explanations for why we have rigged the world around us like we have, with this massive and rapid stimulation from information and entertainment. Being alone with your own thoughts can be scary, but there is a difference between being self-critical and self-loathing. The first one might give you some benefits; you can change the parts that are not

Jung at heart: Ivar is a fan of the psychotherapist's compassionate worldview

really working if you challenge them, rather than just thinking something is wrong with you."

One of the major thematic reference points for *Utgard* was a little closer to the modern day: 20th century Swiss psychotherapist Carl Gustav Jung. His recognition of the 'collective unconscious' – the deepest strata of consciousness shared by us all, and the source of all our fears and instincts but also of the archetypes that resonate across cultures – not only finds a potent metaphor in the album's titular realm, his teachings have resonated deeply across the wider mythological and occult landscapes too, not least due to Jung's own interest in the mystic arts. As with Ivar's fascination for comparative mythologies, the lessons of Carl Jung offer a connection between realms we might have otherwise thought distinct, and, through that, a deeper understanding of what it means to be human.

"Culturally, I think it's because he was bridging the holy with the rational," says Ivar. "His theories and his teachings allowed us to be the people that we were before everything was squared out and politicised. We lost a sense of wondrousness in the process, but he was offering a definition of it that had a scientific, or at least a psychological explanation. It was a recognition of being human as both magical and yet sensible and rational.

"For me, in what he's writing there's some kind of compassion for humans and this need for something that is sacred, otherworldly and fantastic. That's neither a disadvantage nor a superpower. It is part of what it is to be human, and we all share that."

It seems a good response to the current moment: to seek out the unknown, and to listen to the voice of uncertainty.

"Yes. Nothing is true, kind of. And on the flipside, everything is true! Everything is at least possible, and

"BEING ALONE WITH YOUR THOUGHTS IS SCARY"

IVAR BJØRNSON

I think that's a comforting stance. It sounds chaotic, it sounds like disarray and not grounded, but it's a wonderful starting position to view the world, to not have these dogmas. I'm much more interested in catmas! Ha ha ha!"

***UTGARD* IS OUT ON OCTOBER 2 VIA NUCLEAR BLAST. ENSLAVED'S DIGITAL SHOW, *UTGARD – THE JOURNEY WITHIN*, WILL STREAM ON SEPTEMBER 30, EXCLUSIVELY ON METALHAMMER.COM**

FORGED IN IRON

Ivar Bjørnson explains why Enslaved hit up an anvil collector to get the ultimate metal sound on *Utgard*

WHY DID YOU WANT THE SOUND OF AN ANVIL ON THE SONG *JETTEGRYTA*?
"We were working on the idea of the Giants having built these tunnels, and exploring that as metaphors for tunnels into Utgard or other existences. But also as a tunnel as not only a transition place, but maybe a state of not being able to get out of where you are, and sometimes the solution *is* maybe going further inwards. So at some point I got this image of the Giants working with hammers. You can imagine *Lord Of The Rings*, when they are building outside Saruman's castle. I thought an anvil would be great to double the effect."

WHAT DID THE REST OF THE BAND THINK?
"Everyone was totally into it. And then we just mentioned this to Grutle as one of the things we wanted to do at his place at the end of the recording. He said matter-of-factly, 'Oh yeah, that won't be a problem because my neighbour collects anvils.' And then we were quiet and I narrowed my eyes, waiting for him to start laughing, and he never did. His neighbour happens to be a big fan of metal and Enslaved, and at some point when Grutle was over there having a cup of coffee, or maybe a barrel of booze, the guy just showed him his anvil collection."

DID YOU TRY OUT DIFFERENT ANVILS TO FIND THE PERFECT TONE?
"Yes. We tried a lot of anvils with a lot of different hammers, outside, indoors, and then we found the perfect one. It was also fascinating to see Jens [Bogren, producer] when we went into the studio. He was just EQing it, adding some reverb, but found the natural reverb was better. Everyone was totally serious about it, and throughout the whole process I was thinking, 'Am I the only one who thinks this is completely insane, an *anvil* collection?'"

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"We want to create a positive impact"

Bloodywood (left to right): Roshan Roy, Jayant Bhadula, Karan Katiyar, Sarthak Pahwa, Raoul Kerr, Vishesh SIngh

After breaking the internet with their incredible music videos, Bloodywood set themselves a mission to take on the world... with kindness

WORDS: ELEANOR GOODMAN

It was the video for *Ari Ari* that catapulted Bloodywood to the next level. It wasn't just the visuals of singer Jayant Bhadula riding a horse through the busy streets of New Delhi, or Karan Katiyar playing guitar atop a camel, but their unique, euphoric sound. Fusing nu metal with traditional Indian instrumentation and inspirational lyrics, some in Punjabi, it was a heart-swelling, three-minute experience that marked the band out as a unique proposition. *''Cause the desi boys know that diversity's a gift / And we wanna share it with our people worldwide,'* declared rapper Raoul Kerr. They had previously released metal covers of mainstream pop songs, but this was something new, and reached more than 10 million people on Facebook.

"We had gotten numbers before that on a couple of videos, but what really changed was when people said that this is something they've never heard before," Karan explains today, speaking from his studio. "The covers that we did before were well-known outside India. The point behind *Ari Ari* is it's a cover of a folk song that is *not* very well known outside India. We wanted to do that so we'd know that it's the *sound* that's pushing it. So that's when we knew that OK, this is the sweet spot."

To their surprise and delight, Bollywood star Ileana D'Cruz shared the video with her 12 million Instagram followers, giving them

Bloodywood's Wacken set went down a storm

the kind of media exposure that usually comes with a hefty price tag.

"We were excited because metal bands in India don't get attention like that at all," smiles Karan. "And all the record labels are basically tied to Bollywood. So if you ask any pedestrian in India, 'What is your favourite song?' the person would probably tell you the name of a movie first, and then the name of the song after that. Songs are considered a part of movies. So it was a very huge deal for us. We weren't pushing to get into Bollywood, but it was just getting that nod of approval, if you will, from the biggest music industry in India."

It's a sound that's carried them from bedroom band to Wacken alumni – a journey you can see in *Raj Against The Machine*, the new documentary named after their first, and so far only, tour. The band's origins lie with Karan, who started teaching himself guitar in 2008, inspired by the likes of Linkin Park and As I Lay Dying, before falling down "the rabbit hole of thrash, death and doom". He would upload metal covers on YouTube under his own name and played in local bands, which is how he met Jayant in 2015, who sang for tech metallers The Cosmic Truth. The duo transformed Bollywood song *Sinbad The Sailor* into the more tongue-in-cheek *Sinbad The Slayer*, and were over the moon when the original composer shared their parody video.

But when Karan quit his job as a corporate lawyer at Clifford Chance that year, he didn't tell his parents he was pursuing his metal dreams full time. Instead, he would secretly track cover songs at the family home in New Delhi, and then, afraid they would find out he was doing "some kind of weird stuff that involved people screaming," decamp to a friend's studio for a few days to record with Jayant. To keep warm at night, the pair would sleep on the floor wrapped in a curtain.

"They always saw me running off with my guitar somewhere, even

"WE GOT THE NOD OF APPROVAL FROM BOLLYWOOD"

KARAN KATIYAR

Looks like all that practise paid off

when I was in college or working. They thought, 'Yeah, he's in some band, it's a hobby,'" Karan explains. "When I quit my job, I told them I was going to work on a start-up."

They named that "start-up" Bloodywood, and in 2017 gained significant traction with their joyous cover of *Mundian To Bach Ke*, Panjabi MC's hit that had swept charts worldwide in 2003. In the meantime, Karan was making music videos on the side. His lyric video for Nepalese band Underside brought him to the attention of rapper Raoul Kerr, who asked him to film a clip for the song *For Her*. With his shaven head, tank top and ripped physique, he cuts an intimidating figure, but the song actually speaks out against rape culture and victim blaming. Impressed by his lyrical composition and delivery, Bloodywood brought him on as a guest for *Ari Ari*, and he's stayed with them ever since.

"We met at Khan Market, near my house. He came to meet me at 10pm; he was standing right under the lamppost, with shadows under his eyes, and he looked like a daunting figure!" Karan laughs today. "I didn't expect a guy like him to ask me to make a video for his rap song, but he was very chill."

Finally finding their feet, Bloodywood put out two original songs, each with a message. Stirring, heartfelt and earnest, *Jee Veerey* ('Live, Brave One' in Punjabi or Hindi) is about dealing with depression, and on release the band offered 60 pre-paid counselling sessions for fans. Meanwhile, *Endurant* comments on bullying. It's clear Bloodywood are on a mission to promote togetherness, and empower people to overcome adversity.

"I think it's the need of the art, to be honest," says Karan. "To speak about things that are less spoken about. It's much better now in the West, but it's still not where it should be. But it's really, really bad in India. I think I read somewhere that percentage-wise, we've got the most depressed people in the world, and no one talks about it. At the end of the day, we want to create a positive impact with our music."

It was after releasing their own material, and while planning their first tour, that they got the call from Germany's legendary Wacken festival. Elated but apprehensive, the pressure was on to make Bloodywood stage ready, and to recruit other musicians to round out their line-up. While Karan admits none of the band are disciplined by nature, they developed an insane practice regime where they played each song for a total of 20 hours, the whole set for 20 hours, and the whole set with onstage movement for 20 hours. They also performed a small, unadvertised club gig, before hiring an empty venue to perfect their set-up.

"By the 18th or 19th hour of everything, we were really nailing it! It became second nature to play the songs and understand how we're moving around, and what signals to catch. Because of that very nerdy approach, it really helped us a lot," admits Karan. "Wacken doesn't just invite a band that's never played live before to play at Wacken, so it was a huge deal for us. We didn't want to disappoint anyone."

Karan describes the experience as "terrifying". Not only would they be playing their first shows, and with new gear, it was the first time he and drummer Vishesh Singh had left India.

speaking out

Bloodywood aren't the only Indian band speaking up about mental health – these two are also raising awareness

ASWEKEEPSEARCHING
Post-rockers Aswekeepsearching ran the 15-day #foryourmind campaign in July. Musicians and designers sold items to raise funds for organisations contributing to mental wellbeing. The band, from the state of Gujarat, wanted to highlight the impact of lockdown on mental health. "Even though yoga and meditation have been in the culture of India, talks about mental wellness alone were scarce," says singer Uddipan Sarmah. "Now, people in India have started talking about mental wellbeing." Read more at tinyurl.com/Aswekeep

CHA'BI
On the release of the song S*hayad Ke Main Zinda Nahin*, alternative band Cha'bi ran a crowdfunding campaign to raise money for counselling sessions with Dr. Vidhya Nair, a therapist in their home city of Noida. "In India, there's a taboo associated with mental health," explains Akshay Kapoor. "I wrote this song when I was deep into depression; writing and composing were the only real outlets for how I was feeling inside. I didn't want that for other people, because that can get pretty suffocating." See more on Dr. Nair at: www.instagram.com/dr.goodvibes__/

Puppy love: the band bought an animal ambulance because they're certified lads

When they arrived at Wacken's W.E.T. stage for soundcheck, ahead of their 1.45pm slot, the crowd was sparse. But by the time the curtain came down, there were thousands of people chanting Bloodywood's name. "Sometimes there are these rare moments where you feel it was all worth it," smiles Karan. "When you feel that all that you've done has culminated in this one particular moment. And it was honestly life-changing. It's one of those things I still get goosebumps thinking about."

In Bloodywood's documentary, you can see the crowd and the band feeding off each other's energy. Not only are the band throwing everything at their opportunity, there's the powerful, shifting dynamic between Jayant's singing and Raoul's rapping, Karan's soulful tin whistle interludes, and the constant, percussive, geographically distinct sound of Sarthak Pahwa's dhol.

"The dhol is very, very common in north India," explains Karan. "You will hear it at every celebration. Weddings for sure, and if your kid's having a birthday and you want to call some traditional musicians, the dhol will always be there. Diwali festivals. Even if a politician is standing up to put his name in the list of candidates, he'll get this huge rally of dhol players behind him. So the dhol is basically an instrument that's *extremely* loud, and it can be louder than an entire drum kit. It's iconic to the Indian sound."

The band had a few mishaps on tour – including a situation in Russia where they had to evacuate their hotel during a hurricane, knee-deep in water, carrying their gear, while drunk – but ultimately it was a triumph, and a testament to their imagination, perseverance and positivity. In keeping with their generous spirit, they used the profits to buy an animal ambulance for charitable organisation the POSH Foundation, and released *Yaad* (Hindi for 'remember' or 'in memory'), with a video about what it's like to lose a beloved canine friend.

They're currently hunkering down to record their debut album, and even have an offer to write a song for a Bollywood movie. Karan's parents are now in the loop and, thankfully, they're as supportive as Bloodywood's growing legion of fans.

"Whenever a relative comes, my mum forces them to watch our entire Wacken set from the beginning! Ha ha ha!" laughs Karan. "Indian parents rarely ever, *rarely* ever tell you that you've done a good job, or they're proud of you. But you get to know that through their actions." H

BLOODYWOOD'S DOCUMENTARY, *RAJ AGAINST THE MACHINE*, IS AVAILABLE ON YOUTUBE. THEY'RE DUE TO TOUR IN 2021 AND HEADLINE BLOODSTOCK'S SOPHIE LANCASTER STAGE

"WACKEN WAS LIFE-CHANGING"

KARAN KATIYAR

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EDITED BY: JONATHAN SELZER • PICTURE: PRESS

Marilyn Manson is saddled with himself

“MORE WOUNDED AND EMOTIONALLY RAW THAN HE’S EVER BEEN”

MARILYN MANSON

We Are Chaos

LOMA VISTA RECORDINGS/CAROLINE INTERNATIONAL

The God Of Fuck gives his demons free rein

IF THERE'S ONE constant in Marilyn Manson's post-*Holy Wood* trajectory, it's his self-awareness. So you can only assume that the ambiguity in calling his 11th album *We Are Chaos* is deliberate. If you wondering whether or not he's referring to the royal 'we', it goes to the heart of the conundrum facing an artist for whom the personal has become subject to the destructive forces he once had at his command: whether his chief audience these days is an army of the dispossessed, or himself. It's probably no coincidence that he's chosen 9/11 as the release date either, because this might well be Manson's watershed moment.

Admittedly, the initial signs suggest otherwise. *Red Black And Blue* begins with Manson's creaking, spoken word intro distorted by an insectoid echo as he declares, *'I am the king bee, and I will destroy every flower'*, before it launches into familiar industrial territory, all Ministry-style serrated riffs and caustic vocal lunges. But *We Are Chaos* isn't picking up the baton from 2017's *Heaven Upside Down*; this is a jumping off point into territory that's been hinted at but has never come to such compelling fruition. If you thought the lead single and title track was a bit of a sonic outlier, its slightly mawkish, acoustic strum and lighters-aloft combination of reflection and playing to a gallery in need of consolation, it proves to hold the DNA of where the album is headed from here on in. *Don't Chase The Dead* also offers succour, this time by means of a loping, Cure-esque bassline and a heart-salving, anthemic, windswept chorus, teetering just on the right side of schmaltz as Manson's inorganic croak becomes poignantly sorrowful. If you're wondering where the country element Manson suggested is going to appear, *Paint You With My Love* is a ballad, but suffused more in Americana than Merle Haggard, with glam-meets-50s-throwback hints of *Aladdin Sane/Ziggy Stardust*-era Bowie, and the kind of lament you could almost imagine Nick Cave crooning.

We Are Chaos is a journey through different stages, though. *Half-Way & One Step Forward* moves into more atmospheric territory, again channelling Bowie, but this time the creep-into-the shadows feel of *Ashes To Ashes*, as a piano line becomes the pulse for tense drama and a richly textured gravitas. *Infinite Darkness* is cinematic, night-stalking, late 80s-style industrial, but it's the final stretch where *We Are Chaos* reveals its true depths, in all senses of the word, and reaches a zenith of defiant yet emotionally devastating self-reckoning.

Keep My Head Together feels like the dawning of a new era, broader in scope than anything Manson has done to date, its lush, pearlescent guitar effervescing around a powder keg groove reaching psychologically fraught lift-off. *Solve Coagula*'s disco beat marks out a state of emotional exile – *'I'm not special, I'm just broken and I don't want to be fixed'*, and the closing *Broken Needle* is a valedictory, devastating epic, combining wracked candour – *'Are you alright?/'Cos I'm not OK'* with catharsis, the repeated *'I'll never ever play you again'*, once more carrying a charged double meaning.

More wounded and emotionally raw than he's ever been, *We Are Chaos* finds Marilyn Manson at a crossroad. For a former folk devil, you could call that a homecoming.

FOR FANS OF: David Bowie, The Cure, NIN

JONATHAN SELZER

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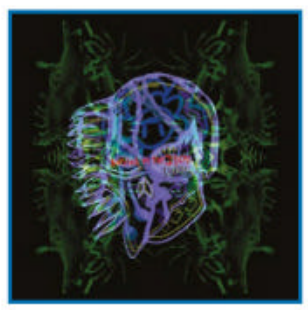


ALL THEM WITCHES

Nothing As The Ideal

NEW WEST

Nashville's hypnotic ramblers rediscover their musical path

2018's *ATW* was the first time All Them Witches came unstuck. Their previous brooding stoner rock, psychedelia, dirty blues and spiritual introspection was hypnotic and unpredictable, making the repetitive cut-and-paste phrases of that last album monotonous. Yet the newly pared-down trio have concocted a strikingly different brew. Recorded at Abbey Road Studios, *Nothing As The Ideal* does its legendary setting justice in multitudinous ways. Steeped in sonorous depth and texture, it's the most mature this band have ever sounded. The swelling anguish of *41* sounds like Arctic Monkeys jamming over a turbine while the Mastodon-indebted chimes of *Lights Out* reveal a huge advance in songcraft and a rebirth for a band who always worshipped the past.

FOR FANS OF: Asteroid, Red Fang, Led Zeppelin

HOLLY WRIGHT

ALPHA WOLF

A Quiet Place To Die

SHARPTONE

Rhino-wasting, nu metal manoeuvres from Down Under

Alpha Wolf aren't mucking around. The Aussies lunge for the jugular on the huge opening title track and continue until nothing remains but a fleshy puddle. The quintet are part of a new crop taking the spirit of nu metal, sharpening up the edges and expanding the template. On closer *Don't Ask*, the band incorporate post-rock, which leaves them room to grow but this album's charms lie in the monolithic breakdowns of *Creep* and *Rot In Pieces*, where guitars stab like shards of glass. By the time vocalist Lochie Keogh roars *'Watch the bodies DRRRRRRROP!'* on the monstrous *Akudama*, you'll be running to smack the nearest rhino in the face.

FOR FANS OF: Polaris, Void Of Vision, Knocked Loose

DANNII LEIVERS

ASCENSION OF THE WATCHERS

Apocrypha

DISSONANCE

Fear Factory vocalist rekindles his atmospheric adventures

When Fear Factory's Burton C Bell released *Numinosum*, the haunting debut from his vampiric side-project Ascension Of The Watchers, it hinted that a long exploration of his main band's more ambient sensibilities lay ahead. Instead, it's taken 12 years for the follow-up to finally arrive. Amid John Bechdel's (Ministry, Killing Joke, Prong) spectral instrumentation, Burton's eerie drone is the perfect embellishment for the mournful soundscapes of *Ghost Heart* and the title track, which opens with a spooky recording of an unexplained sound recorded in the vocal booth. Dark and glacial, *A Wolf Interlude* and *Cygnus Aeon* build on the velvet giants of the 80s goth scene – a sumptuous treat.

FOR FANS OF: The Mission, Killing Joke, Fields Of The Nephilim

DANNII LEIVERS

DEFTONES

Ohms

REPRISE

Sacramento's atmospheric adventurers put one foot back on the ground

IT'S RARE IN a career spanning more than a quarter of a century that a band could make as few missteps as Deftones have. The Sacramento alt-metallers have rarely let their lofty standards slip below essential, but, even though many were hugely onboard with the more ethereal, experimental post-rock vibes of 2016's *Gore*, there were some murmurings of discontent from fans that the album sacrificed too much in the way of heaviness. If you were one of those people then *Ohms* will definitely go some way to placating you and your tastes, as long as you don't expect Deftones to have thrown the baby out with the bathwater.

Opener *Genesis* is expertly pitched between the slow-burning mystique of the previous album, yet it's still dominated by a gargantuan Stephen Carpenter metal riff. It's then followed by two songs that sting like a butterfly and float like a bee; *Ceremony* is woozy one minute and white hot the next, while *Urantia* chugs into view as if it is going to be a full-blown metallic stomper before pulling back to a gentle strut. This dance continues for the rest of the song, and showcases everything that make Deftones so special. Their use of dynamics, the ability to be so heart-stopping beautiful yet outwardly aggressive, is the reason why so many people hold this band in such esteem. That push and pull is second nature to them at this point, and while it wouldn't be correct to say that *Ohms* points the band in any new direction or draws from any new influences, Deftones are such masters at taming these contradictory, capacious sounds that the results are continually glorious.

Saying that, the second half of the record is definitely where the old-school fans of traditional heaviness will have the most joy. *Pompeii* is a tricksy number, starting as slow and quiet as the album gets before launching into a destructive groove and then ending on as close to Vangelis-inspired synthwave scene as Deftones have ever been, before *This Link Is Dead* comes powering into view. It's probably the most out-and-out brutal Deftones have sounded since *When Girls Telephone Boys* on their 2003 self-titled album. It's such a delight to hear the band rage with such uncompromising intensity again, so good in fact that it's the highlight of the record. They don't let up for the following *Radiant City*, and even though *Headless* is a slow and more spacious number it still contains some crushing guitar parts. The title track closes the record, once more an amalgam of lush melodies and post-metal crush, but with an added stoner riff that wouldn't be out of place on a Red Fang album.

Ohms is an album for every type of Deftones fan. Whether you're longing for the days of *Around The Fur* or if you appreciated the more measured material on *Gore* there will be something that you'll love. In taking an extensive tour of their past, Deftones continue to be essential today.

FOR FANS OF: **Hum, Glassjaw, Failure**

STEPHEN HILL

PRESS/FRANK MADDOCKS

AYREON
Transitus
MUSIC THEORIES RECORDINGS

Arjen Lucassen spreads more stars across an 80-minute epic

Transitus is a rock opera based on a gothic ghost story, featuring Dee Snider, Marty Friedman and Joe Satriani, and narrated by *Doctor Who* star Tom Baker. It's classic Arjen Lucassen – the Dutch polymath, Ayreon's prolific progenitor and mastermind at writing music for geeks – that boasts more stars than the Milky Way. While it's easy to get sidetracked by the guest appearances, that have included James LaBrie and Bruce Dickinson on past albums, the magic abounds in the way that Lucassen writes for those voices. On *Get Out! Now!*, Dee Snider snarls as the "twisted" (arf) Father while Tommy Karevik and Oceans Of Slumber's Cammie Gilbert on *Two Worlds Now One* is a spinetingling spotlight moment. The epic feast of cod-theatrics might not be to everyone's tastes but this is definitely Lucassen finally achieving his Lloyd Webber moment.

FOR FANS OF: Andrew Lloyd Webber, Circus Maximus, Trans-Siberian Orchestra

HOLLY WRIGHT

BABIRUSA
Humanoid
SELF-RELEASED

Aussie metalcore newbies throw all their ideas into the concept basket

Brisbane's Babirusa seem more ambitious than many of their deathcore peers, having threaded a sci-fi concept narrative throughout their debut full-length. But these narrative elements, presented as spoken-word interludes, give the album a disjointed feel, as if Despised Icon were providing the soundtrack for a BBC Radio 4 sci-fi drama. Still, it provides *Humanoid* with a talking point, something it would likely not have had otherwise as, musically, it's fairly by-numbers deathcore. There are interesting passages on *Reflection* and *343* that hint at a more cinematic scale, but rarely do the band deviate wildly on the meat of the songs themselves. A novel idea executed with less courage than it truly deserves.

FOR FANS OF: Chelsea Grin, Whitechapel, Emmure

REMFRY DEDMAN

CHROME WAVES
Where We Live
DISORDER RECORDINGS

Former Nachtmystium guitarist broadens his palette of gloom

Chrome Waves were first formed almost a decade ago with Jeff Wilson (ex-Nachtmystium, Abigail Williams) at the helm. They released one well-received EP and then disappeared for nigh-on eight years. This, however, is their second full-length in as many years. *Where We Live* starts on the BM-influenced tones of *Hallow Dreams*; glittering guitars and guttural vocals construct a mournful atmosphere before the record glides through the post-punk façade of *On The Precipice* and onwards to the funereal melancholy of *Where You Live*. Ostensibly, Chrome Waves are post-black metal, but their sound moves around post-punk and takes in elements of early 90s grunge, too. *Spoonfed* is one example, melding all these genres to create a despondent yet invitingly lustrous atmosphere of self-reflection and loss.

FOR FANS OF: An Autumn For Crippled Children, Amesoeurs, Alice In Chains

CHERYL CARTER

CRIPPLED BLACK PHOENIX
Ellengæst
SEASON OF MIST

British post-rock mavericks thrive amid turmoil

Despite another line-up change, Crippled Black Phoenix have conjured their most cohesive and emotionally devastating record here. With vocal contributions from the likes of Gaahl, Tribulation's Jonathan Hultén and Anathema's Vincent Cavanagh, *Ellengæst* certainly doesn't lack class or charisma, but it's the monstrous, crestfallen beauty of these songs that will cement the album as a clear career high point, albeit among many. It begins with ghostly trumpet, before *House Of Fools* erupts. A snarling, scabrous prog-folk diatribe, led by Cavanagh and CBP mainstay Belinda Kordic, it has an air of Bad Seeds menace and a chorus to kill for. *Lost* is all edgy, post-punk rumble, billowing crescendos and shattered illusions; *In The Night* is a moonlit funeral, with Gaahl and Kordic delivering the last rites; *Cry Of Love* is a thunderous, none-more-timely plea for humanity. It's all profoundly heavy and truly mesmerising.

FOR FANS OF: Anathema, Nick Cave, Neurosis

DOM LAWSON

Amaranthe size up their next interior decoration challenge

AMARANTHE
Manifest
NUCLEAR BLAST

Gargantuan-sounding Swedes pull out yet more stops

AMARANTHE HAVE BEEN in a state of perpetual motion since 2014's experimental juncture, *Massive Addictive*. The Swedes have sometimes found themselves inaccurately lumped in with Europe's symphonic fare, but other than their penchant for grandiosity, and singer Elize Ryd's Nightwish connections (she infamously stepped in for ex-Nightwish vocalist Anette Olzon at a gig in 2012), the association is specious. Instead, Amaranthe have spent the last half a decade gradually augmenting a divisive yet vivid blend of power metal, pop and euphoric EDM with every album, eventually nailing a skyscraper-sized sound on 2018's *Helix*.

Having carved their own niche, Amaranthe seem content to bed into it for a while rather than continuing to chip away at the rockface, and *Manifest* picks up where *Helix* left off. This is about as sparkly as metal gets – the only way *Adrenaline* could get more Eurovision is if Graham Norton had popped up and started bellowing the chorus. *Fearless*, *Make It Better* and the crystalline *Viral* revolve around gigantic, cheesy hooks, sustained by a three-pronged attack from vocalists Elize, Henrik Englund Wilhelmsson and Nils Molin with plenty of metal crunch.

The band have dipped their toes into rapping before – see *Helix*'s jarring cut, *GG6* – and someone really should have talked the band out of having another go before they recorded the abominable *Boom!*. The album finishes on a high, though, with *Do Or Die*, an excellent collab with ex-Arch Enemy singer Angela Gossow, in her first vocal appearance since 2011, that adds grit to a radiant shower of laser synths and rippling riffs.

No doubt, Amaranthe are not for everyone and this album will do nothing to hook listeners not already onboard with their gleaming razzmatazz. But for those already invested, this is the band's strongest effort yet, relishing in a sound that they've honed, and now they can own.

FOR FANS OF: Beyond The Black, Babymetal, Battle Beast

DANNII LEIVERS

Enslaved have taken another giant leap into the unknown

ENSLAVED
Utgard
NUCLEAR BLAST

Peerless Norwegians voyage further into the Nine Realms

THE WONDERFUL THING about every Enslaved release is expecting the unexpected. Of course, you can anticipate the unique blend of their black and Viking metal roots with progressive rock's near-endless scope, but it's all the permutations of this clash of styles that ensures no two records are ever the same. That their 14th album, 2017's *E*, was arguably their best, is testament to how much more the nonpareil Norwegians still have left in the well and bodes extremely well for its follow-up.

Focusing on the titular home of giants in Norse mythology, *Utgard* is a journey into the mysterious and uncharted realms both thematically and musically. Take the opener, *Fires In The Dark*, which moves from ancient chants, folky harmonies, apparitional summonings and the band's trademark marriage of the extreme and ethereal, all within six minutes of unequalled mastery. After announcing himself in spectacular fashion on *E* after the departure of Herbrand Larsen, keyboardist and clean vocalist Håkon Vinje again anchors the rich, visionary songs with his soothing tones, particularly on the likes of hauntingly beautiful closer *Distant Seasons* and *Sequence*'s ascent into gorgeous, serene heights. While synths and effects enrich the mood of songs like the krautrock-inspired *Urjotun*, this is still a band whose power is grounded in organic songcraft, with *Jettegryta*'s otherworldly evocations coming on the back of hypnotic, sinister riffs, and *Homebound* and *Storms Of Utgard* centred around immediately recognisable melodies that lead you through the wild lands.

After a rapid gallop, Ice Dale's lead skills come to the fore on the remarkable *Flight Of Thought And Memory*, that again condenses a career's worth of fearless expeditions into the unknown into a few fleeting moments. At times bleak and barbarous, at others limitless and life affirming, *Utgard* is a vast and unpredictable. There's still no one else like them in this or any other realm.

FOR FANS OF: Opeth, Blut Aus Nord, Ihsahn

ADAM REES

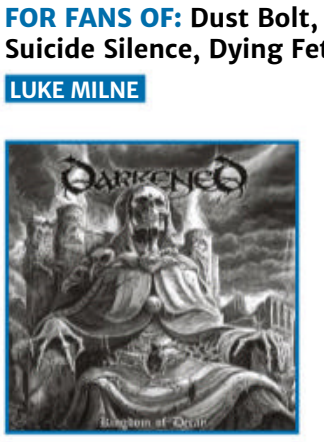
CYTOTOXIN
Nuklearth
UNIQUE LEADER

Chernobyl-haunted death metallers dish out the dread

German Chernobyl-themed quintet Cytotoxin's fourth studio offering is equipped with an explosive array of short, sharp and deadly death metal armaments. Guitarist Fonzo's wildly careening, chunky riffs slot with ease into Stephan Stockburger's show-stealing percussive prowess, presenting a tightly knit racecourse of lightning-fast riffs and stuttering rhythms for ex-Extortionist vocalist Grimo to navigate with powerful, low-slung gutturals. The sickening sense of dread lashed across the album is relentlessly and palpably potent, with the interlude *Dead Zone Anthem* and closer *Mors Temporis* gifting brief moments of sanctuary from this brutally impressive, enjoyable assault.

FOR FANS OF: Dust Bolt, Suicide Silence, Dying Fetus

LUKE MILNE



DARKENED
Kingdom Of Decay
EDGED CIRCLE

Death metal stalwarts emerge from their realm of chaos

Darkened are your typical 21st-century supergroup, spread over two continents and with an album created solely through file sharing. Yet, somehow, their debut album works. Their combined résumés (A Canorous Quintet, Grave, Dismember, Excruciate etc) help, as does getting onboard with one of the architects of their main influence – Bolt Thrower drummer Andy Whale. But once through those well-trodden battlefields, the album's second half embarks on a doomier, more personal journey, resurrecting the kind of accessible death metal that took bands like Hypocrisy to the main stages of the festival circuit in the late 90s. It's where Darkened truly come into their own.

FOR FANS OF: Bolt Thrower, Hypocrisy, Grave

OLIVIER BADIN

DEAFKIDS & PETBRICK
Deafbrick
ROCKET RECORDINGS

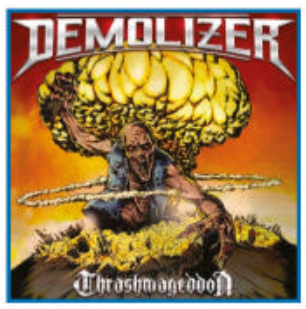
Brazilian noisemakers make an incendiary match

Sometimes, you just need to be *punished*. While *Deafbrick* occasionally swaps the aural strap-on for a *Fifty Shades* feather duster – the elongated tribal drum passages may wither the patience of some, as might the eight-minute cover of a two-minute Discharge song – it's still an exciting proposition. Iggor Cavalera's noise rock outfit Petbrick, teaming up with Brazilian industrial punks Deafkids? Yes, please. And when they go full throttle, it's monstrous. *Força Bruta* and *Mega-Ritual* are both hyper-violent, scathing blasts of punked-up electronic metal, backed up by gabber beats that will have you gurning for days. It's like the daddies of d-beat – think Discharge and Anti Cimex cleaning Al Jourgensen's nappies at a Rotterdam rave.

FOR FANS OF: Surgical Meth Machine, Discharge, Author & Punisher

ALEC CHILLINGWORTH

PRESS/ROY BJØRGE



DEMOLIZER
Thrashmageddon
MIGHTY MUSIC

Danish neckwreckers make an anti-authoritarian racket

After turning heads (and bothering necks) last year when they earned a place in the finals of the Danish Wacken Metal Battle, Demolizer have been steadily earning an army of admirers. Their debut album is sure to swell their ranks and it's a lightning-fast, impeccably performed record that's loaded with rapier riffs. (*NTC*, *Built On Slavery*). Describing themselves as "a big, angry middle finger pointed towards the establishment," the four-piece deliver nine intense and aggressive tracks in thrall to Slayer and Exodus. What they lack in any invention they more than make up for with passion, precision and pit-ready anthems such as *Lost In Torment* and *Cancer In The Brain*.

FOR FANS OF: Municipal Waste, Havok, Slayer

EDWIN MCFEE

DYNFARI
Myrkurs er þörf
CODE666

Atmospheric Icelanders eke brilliance from their bleakness

Iceland's legacy of enthralling music continues with Dynfari's fifth full-length since forming a decade ago. Their black metal takes flight through the post-metal guitars of the serene opening track, *Dauðans dimmu dagar*, which is threaded into the initial steps of *Langar nætur (í botnlausum spíralstiga)*. Soon, though, the gruff voice of Jóhann Örn punctures the peace and the opposing forces forge a sense of uneasy harmony. Dynfari surmise that to have light you must also have darkness, and as the record progresses this becomes clearer as they journey through the soaring sorrow of *Ég tortímdi sjálfum mér* and the vast expanse of *Peripheral Dreams*. The song manoeuvres its drama through aggressive bursts of speed and contrasting mournful passages as Dynfari seek to stoke a sense of redemption from the ashes of loss.

FOR FANS OF: Sólstafir, Hamferð, Auðn

CHERYL CARTER

ESHTADUR
From The Abyss
BLOODBLAST

Colombian symphonic extreme metallers soar to new peaks

Eshtadur's approach to extremity has always been a chimeric affair, swirling European melodeath and a hint of symphonics into a blackened pot to produce top-grade nastiness. *From The Abyss* carries this torch to ever greater heights, a crisp production job capturing their imperious majesty while still allowing flashy guitarwork to soar above the din. *Lowborn Bastard* and *The Red Door* draw from the same wellspring that make Behemoth and Dimmu Borgir such a fearsome proposition, but it's in the 80s-flavoured guitar solo of *The Fall* where you'll notice kernels of arena-rock flamboyance hidden behind the extremity. A cover of *All She Wrote* by early 90s also-rans Firehouse provides the record's oddest moment: gloriously ridiculous, yet endearing enough to turn heads. In a post-Babymetal and Alestorm landscape, it just might be the gimmick to clue the masses in to Colombia's finest new metal export.

FOR FANS OF: Fleshgod Apocalypse, Scar Symmetry, Black Therapy

RICH HOBSON

EXIST
Egoiista
PROSTHETIC

Wide-ranging prog metal with a whiff of the ethereal

The intelligent technical design and sheer scope of Exist's third studio album is perhaps best evidenced by the 10-minute opening epic, *Through Suffering He Paints The Universe* – a labyrinthine, 10-minute journey of jazz-inflected and discordant melodies. Despite this potentially intimidating start, *Egoiista* proves to be a treasure trove of colourful and dynamic delights. Delicately ethereal, melodic offerings *Siblings Born Into Different Dimensions* and *Amongst The Trees* lie as comfortable bedfellows with more agitated passages of distorted, technical guitarwork present in *Until The Storm Comes* and *Egocosm*. Topped with vocalists Max Phelps' and Alex Weber's back-and-forth vocal pendulum of cleanly sung melodies and powerful gutterals, Exist's exploratory prog metal warrants multiple listens to fully appreciate the undeniable wealth of ideas packed into *Egoiista*'s extensive listening experience.

FOR FANS OF: Opeth, Meshuggah, Devin Townsend

LUKE MILNE

SMALL MERCIES

Where EP is short for 'Epic Potential'

ABYSS/BESNA
Split CD
WOLFMOND

Germany's Abyss and Slovakia's Besna offer different takes on BM. Although drawing on Swedish scene-inspired melody and post-rock respectively, neither band manage to deliver something truly personal.

OLIVIER BADIN

HAD
MLP
ME SACO UN OJO

The cavernous death metal bellows of Incantation and the imperial dissonance of Immolation belch out from the sulphuric crypt HAD (Danish for 'hate') dwell in on their untitled MLP. The potential for Tomb Mold-esque ascent is plentiful.

DEAN BROWN

OOZE
Shivers
ROBUSTFELLOW PRODUCTIONS

Highly atmospheric and dripping with dynamic exploration, the second EP from Ukraine's multi-genre instrumentalists is sure to turn heads. Forlorn violin melodies saunter forth from four tracks that offer a rare and mesmerising treat.

LUKE MILNE

PIG DESTROYER
The Octagonal Stairway EP
RELAPSE

The first three tracks of colossal grooving grind pick up where *Head Cage* left off, but the next three tracks of sample-thick, electro-ambient noisescapes featuring Iggor Cavalera *really* stand out. Tune in, turn on, unsettle nerves.

CONNIE GORDON

RESERVING DIRTNAPS
Another Disaster
WAR

Four tracks in less than 12 minutes of mosh-heavy, testosterone-pumped, old-school hardcore in the Agnostic Front/Madball vein from Memphis. It's not nuanced, subtle or forward-thinking in any way, but it is undeniably effective.

STEPHEN HILL

VITAL SPIRIT
In The Faith That Looks Through Death
HIDDEN TRIBE

Crunching dynamism, orgiastic solos and tumbleweed-festooned spaghetti western melodies clamber for attention here, leaving things somewhere between Tombs, Volahn and latterday Earth.

ALEX DELLER

Finntroll: all ears

FINNTROLL
Vredesvävd
CENTURY MEDIA

The long-awaited return of the O.G. folk metal fiends

FOR THOSE INCLINED to embrace the dark, Finntroll have always been the greatest of folk metal's many and varied offspring. Other bands have taken the genre to greater commercial heights and some have made grand creative contributions, too. But still, seven years on from the sturdy, spiky *Blodsvept*, Finntroll return sounding as unique, instantly recognisable and, despite that familiarity, as absurdly entertaining and endearingly twisted as ever. You simply can't fuck with the O.G. troll crew.

Safe in the knowledge that their mischievous, malevolent formula has never been adequately copied or bettered, Finntroll have simply made another great album here. As is traditional, *Vredesvävd* is bookended by eerie, moonlit ambient, but the meat of the campfire feast is firmly in the band's long-established wheelhouse. But while many comparable bands repeat themselves to no great effect, Finntroll's brutal, earthy attack has lost none of its initial allure.

Opener proper *Att Döda Med En Sten* plunges the listener back into Finntroll's swivel-eyed waking dream with full force; those trademark twinkling keyboard motifs and frontman Vreth's barbarous rasp swirling around an urgent, priapic barrage of riffs. Elsewhere, recent single *Ormfolk* is a nailed-on crowd-pleaser in fine *Trollhammaren* tradition, while both *Myren* and *Mask* pump up the humppa with short, sharp and riotous results. For deeper, darker forest hues, both *Vid Häxans Härd* and album closer *Ylaren* are as epic and exhilarating as anything in the Finntroll canon.

It's all textbook stuff to a great extent, but that long hiatus from the studio has given the band a renewed sense of grim abandon. The result is a snappy, immersive and addictive 40-minute riot, with everything from the strident *Grenars Väg* to *Forsen*'s demonic sea shanty hammering home the enduring potency of these forest-dwelling diehards' crazed vision. It's a genuine relief to have them back. To the forest!

FOR FANS OF: **Ensiferum, Moonsorrow, Aether Realm**

DOM LAWSON

FIGHT THE FIGHT
Deliverance
INDIE RECORDINGS

Eclectic metal adventures with characteristic Nordic fizz

These Norwegians' second album is nothing if not diverse. The echoes of Rammstein and Red Hot Chili Peppers amid the sea of melodic, industrial and black metal influences make for some strange double-takes, but the confident songwriting and the spirited party vibe showcased on *Triggerfinger* all make for an engaging ride. There's also some solid guitarwork and a hypnotic frontman, Lars Vegas, whose vocals transition easily from gritty roars to cleaner realms. Even when the pace drags a little during the likes of *Calling You Back*, his fiercer sections shine and complement the soaring solos and groove that bubbles in tracks like *Dying* and the well-paced *Turbo Sex*. A fun ride.

FOR FANS OF: **Killswitch Engage, Bury Tomorrow, Our Hollow, Our Home**

NIK YOUNG

FIRES IN THE DISTANCE
Echoes From Deep November
PROSTHETIC

Former melodeath squad get a murk-laden makeover

This Connecticut quartet evolved out of Archaic Decapitator, but their debut album is a far gloomier affair. The melodic DM influence hasn't totally disappeared – *Elusive Light*'s stirring Dark Tranquillity-esque harmonies sit atop a deft mid-paced chug – but *Echoes...* mostly delves headfirst into deep, sumptuous doom in the vein of early Paradise Lost. Songs like *The Lock And The Key* build vast, melancholic soundscapes from desolate, detuned guitars and ethereal keys. *Reflections In The Ice* takes that gothic vibe even further, putting forlorn synth arpeggios upfront as vocalist Kristian Grimaldi exorcises demons with his rich, guttural baritone. A promising start.

FOR FANS OF: **Paradise Lost, Swallow The Sun, Dark Tranquillity**

KEZ WHELAN

FIT FOR A KING
The Path
SOLID STATE

Texan metalcore veterans make a weighty return

Two years on from *Dark Skies*, these Texas metallers' sixth album proves to be a much heavier experience. Boasting stronger song-writing and bludgeoning percussion with anthemic nous, their fusion of metal-core and post-hardcore has never sounded so potent. *The Face Of Hate*'s twin harmonies descend into brutish breakdowns while the title track's simple but catchy refrain and *Breaking The Mirror*'s soaring chorus are Killswitch-esque metal-core at its finest. *God Of Fire* and *Louder Voice* introduce bursts of skittering electronica, slipping into nihilistic grooves with ease. It doesn't reinvent the wheel but *The Path* twists and turns with just the right amount of neck-bothering thrills and experimentation to titillate fans old and new.

FOR FANS OF: **Miss May I, Architects, Killswitch Engage**

SOPHIE MAUGHAN

FINNTROLL: PRESS/HENRY SÖDERLUND EDITED BY MIKAEL KARLBOM

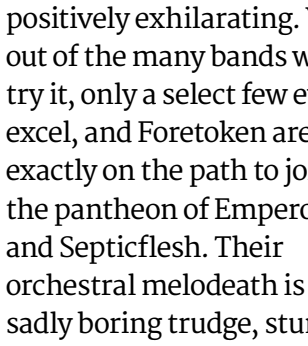
FORETOKEN
Ruin
PROSTHETIC

Symphonic melodeath debutants overstay their welcome

"Extreme symphonic metal" – it's a combination that should be ideal. After all, classical and heavy music share a penchant for being as dramatic as possible, so putting the two together should be positively exhilarating. Yet, out of the many bands who try it, only a select few ever excel, and Foretoken aren't exactly on the path to join the pantheon of Emperor and Septicflesh. Their orchestral melodeath is a sadly boring trudge, stunted by a preference for up-to-11-minute-long songs that have enough ideas to fill maybe three. Their restless blastbeats – courtesy of Triptykon/ex-Necrophagist man Hannes Grossmann – bombastic strings and whirlwind riffs are fun for a while, but minimal deviation from those fundamentals makes *Ruin* suffer. Next time, borrowing some brevity from At The Gates might be in order.

FOR FANS OF: Fleshgod Apocalypse, Emperor, Aephanemer

MATT MILLS



FORLORN WORLD
Umbra
SELF-RELEASED

Bloodshot Down frontman embarks on a sci-fi mini-epic

A solo project from Bloodshot Dawn frontman Josh McMorran, Forlorn World maintains much of the pummelling technicality of his day job with an epic narrative and a melodic death metal sheen to match. While the brutish chug of opener *Moving Mountains* ticks the necessary boxes and reaches a peak with an immediate chorus, *Umbra* develops into a brief but fiendishly inventive trip into far-off domains, not only befitting the awesome album artwork but also succeeding in working the neck muscles too. The album's real ace in the hole is Josh's outstanding lead work, with the scintillating breaks on *Traveller* and *March Into Void* proving dizzily impressive feats. Though lacking the commanding voice needed for the likes of the heroic *The Shadowmancer* to hit the heights they promise, the joy and enthusiasm that shines through on every note of *Umbra* is compellingly infectious.

FOR FANS OF: Sylosis, Scar Symmetry, Wintersun

ADAM REES

ANNA VON HAUSSWOLFF
All Thoughts Fly
SOUTHERN LORD

Germany's mercurial maestro resorts to just one set of pipes

Hammer can't rightly claim to have received many instrumental pipe organ albums to review over the years, but if we had, *All Thoughts Fly* would likely be up there with the very best of 'em. If your first thought is that it's a shame – a waste, even – to omit von Hausswolff's striking, mercurial voice it's a notion that's banished as soon as the album begins to unfurl. With precious little artifice or adornment she teases out a bewildering array of moods, emotions and sounds, drifting from the springy playfulness of opener *Theatre Of Nature* to moments of looming unease and on to periods of dappled ambience that elicit wistful visions of bright, pure sunlight refracted through dewdrops that cling to the petals of strange, fleshy flowers. It's a charming and utterly enveloping release, and one worth setting aside some time to get lost within.

FOR FANS OF: Sunn O))), Barn Owl, Godspeed You! Black Emperor

ALEX DELLER

HEATHEN
Empire Of The Blind
NUCLEAR BLAST

Bay Area thrash originals keep their knives sharp

Often credited as being one of the standard setters for the Bay Area thrash scene alongside the likes of Testament, Forbidden and Vio-lence, Heathen are a bit like all those movie monsters from the 80s; just when we thought they were done and dusted they surprise us all with one more killer blow. *Empire Of The Blind* is their much-delayed fourth album and while their history has been blighted by plenty of stops and starts, musically they haven't missed a beat. David White's vocals call to mind Robb Flynn mixed with Joey Belladonna, and have only gotten better with age. Infused with politics, powerful melodies and pummelling riffs and absolutely loaded with pit anthems (*Dead And Gone*, *The Gods Divide*) these old dogs also show off some new tricks on the muscular Skid Row-esque ballad, *Shrine Of Apathy*.

FOR FANS OF: Exodus, Forbidden, Machine Head

EDWIN MCFEE

Mastodon want to take a good long look at your torso

MASTODON
Medium Rarities
REPRISE

Celebratory odds & sods from Atlanta's prog-metal masters

MASTODON ARE *THE* quintessential modern metal 'album' band. That makes *Medium Rarities* a strange proposition – after all, how do you process a compilation release from a band whose 20-year career is often typified by drastic shifts in tone between records? By packing it with characteristic brilliance, of course.

The tracks on *Medium Rarities* each point to serving specific sectors of Mastodon's fanbase. Prog musos can gorge on the luscious tonal banquets of instrumental playthroughs of *Toe To Toes* or *Halloween*, whereas fans of more meaty fare can revel in rollicking live renditions of *Blood And Thunder* and *Circle Of Cysquatch*. But ultimately, this compilation's strongest offerings come from the titular rarities; *Fallen Torches* whets the appetite for things still yet to come, while *Atlanta*, featuring Butthole Surfers vocalist Gibby Haynes, is a gloriously unhinged fuzz-punk-metal mash-up coming on like the Surfers' *Independent Worm Saloon* 2.0.

As multifaceted as the band it celebrates, *Medium Rarities* isn't mere nostalgia, it's exemplifies why Mastodon have become one of metal's most reliable and beloved bands. This is particularly prevalent in the selection of covers that showcase their prowess as songwriters. Feist's *A Commotion* is subsumed almost entirely into the Mastodon framework to lend it a meaty ethereality, while The Flaming Lips' *A Spoonful Weighs A Ton* sounds so classically proggy you can practically hear the band shedding their denim for suede.

Even amidst all this prog majesty, Mastodon have never shied away from poking fun at themselves. *Cut You Up With A Linoleum Knife* sees the band go Dethklok-meets-King-Diamond, with a lyrical message that should be heeded more in 2020 – *'Be considerate to others or I will bite you in the torso and give you a disease'*, treading the line between deranged and brilliant in a way only true genius can.

FOR FANS OF: Baroness, Toundra, High On Fire

RICH HOBSON

MASTODON: PRESS/JIMMY HUBBARD

Napalm Death: looking on the bright side of life

NAPALM DEATH
Throes Of Joy In The Jaws Of Defeatism
CENTURY MEDIA

Brummie pioneers rise and grind for the 16th time

AFTER MORE THAN 30 years and numerous line-up changes, Birmingham grind pioneers Napalm Death still sound like the musical equivalent of electro-convulsive therapy. Their sound is a bracing jolt to the system that – for all its apparent barbarism – is intended to bring about positive transformation. This therapeutic aspect is reflected in the title of their 16th studio album. Not for them the icy nihilism of black metal, the Lovecraftian vistas of death metal, nor the dismal solipsism of doom; over the years the band have remained true to the humanist principles that charged 1987's *Scum* and 1988's *From Enslavement To Obliteration*, and with *Throes Of Joy In The Jaws Of Defeatism* they reassert themselves as a force for life.

At this stage of the game, the band – whose core is represented by bassist Shane Embury (the sole original member) and Mark 'Barney' Greenaway, with Danny Herrera on drums and the semi-absent Mitch Harris joining live guitarist John Cooke on riffs – aren't about to make any shocking departures. Napalm Death in 2020 are about tweaking their trademark squall this way and that; thus neck-snapping grind shares space with elements of groove (*Fluxing Of The Muscle*), crustpunk (*Zero Gravitas Chamber*), industrial-strength slowcore (*Invigorating Clutch*) and Killing Joke-style post-punk (*Amoral*). This time around all the songs have been written by Shane and *Throes Of Joy...* serves as a reminder that the bassist has not only steered the band surely for three decades, but remains gratifyingly open to external influence.

'Wokeness' might be in fashion but Napalm Death have been sticking up for the disenfranchised since 1981. In this sense they have less in common with contemporary metal and more with Canadian doom-hop artist Backxwash and London grimepunk agitators Bob Vylan. Long may they rage.

FOR FANS OF: Discharge, Terrorizer, Killing Joke

JOSEPH STANNARD

HELLRIPPER
The Affair Of The Poisons
PEACEVILLE

Black-thrash adrenaline pumped direct into the heart of the darkness

James McBain's second album as Hellripper is blackened thrash perfected. It pilfers the wild solos and hammer-ons from *Kill 'Em All*, borrows Venom's rock'n'roll Satan-baiting, and steals the snot-covered punk straight from Motörhead's pockets – all screamed like a badger-faced black metaller, played like Kreator at their tightest. Throw in subtle, early Cradle Of Filth keys under *Savage Blasphemy*; close it with an elite-tier, fully fledged black metal track like *The Hanging Tree*; pack the bastard with so many riffs and chant-along moments it might actually shit itself, and you've got the freshest sounding throwback metal album... ever? It's Elon Musk firing a vintage car into space; it's dogs walking humans. Fuck it – this is blackened thrash's *Permission To Land*.

FOR FANS OF: Midnight, Impaled Nazarene, Wraith

ALEC CHILLINGWORTH

HYMN
Breach Us
FYSISK FORMAT

Cranium-pounding deliverance from the doom-sludge boondocks

It's easy to overlook that Norway's Hymn are a mere duo. Markus Støle delivers drums that mimic hostile cannon fire and Ole Rockseth uses piano wire-thick guitar strings and an air-pushing embankment of amplification while tip-toeing on an array of effects pedals. The result is an unholy racket that lands with the subtlety of a nuke test on the purgatory between brusque stoner metal, progressive post-metal and crushing doom-sludge. *Exit Through Fire* takes on the clobber/caress dynamic by somehow delivering both elements simultaneously in its second half while *Crimson* marries a harsh rhythmic onslaught with hazy psychedelia and painful vocals, all making for a fantastic listen.

FOR FANS OF: Neurosis, Yob, Conan

CONNIE GORDON

ICE NINE KILLS
I Heard They Kill Live!!
FEARLESS

Boston horror fiends serve up a host of choice cuts live

It may be impossible to capture the high-octane drama of an Ice Nine Kills show, but this comes close. Recorded in Massachusetts last November, *...Live* comes complete with palpable circlepits, heart-wrenching singalongs and neck-snapping breakdowns. Proceedings open with the *Friday The 13th*-inspired *Thank God It's Friday* before transporting you to the shark-infested *Rocking The Boat* and immersing you in the foreboding *Halloween* homage *Stabbing In The Dark*. Throughout their tour of iconic horror moments frontman Spencer Charnas's commanding stage energy is a constant. INK have produced a live album so tight that it could easily be mistaken for a refined studio effort.

FOR FANS OF: Motionless In White, Crown The Empire, I Prevail

ALI COOPER

WORLD SERVICE
Heavy metal uprisings from around the globe

ASTRIFEROUS
The Lower Levels Of Sentience
ME SACO UN OJO

These Costa Rican death metal muckspreaders' EP sits comfortably alongside labelmates Ataraxy and Hyperdontia. Impressively constructed and grotesquely atmospheric.

ALEX DELLER

OFFSET
Bent Benevolence
PULVERISED

Efficient if generic crustiness from Singapore. Offset's music rarely changes course over four tracks of deathly punkishness. Beautiful cover art from manga artist Shintaro Kago, though.

JOSEPH STANNARD

TULKAS
Beginning Of The End
NOBLE DEMON

With four lean chunks of furious, modernist thrash and an exhilarating Metallica cover, this is a glowing advert for Mexico's brutal underground. In a great year for thrash, Tulkas slay as hard as anyone.

DOM LAWSON

PRESS/JELENA JAKOVLJEVIC

IDOLATRIA
Tetrabestiarchy
SIGNAL REX

Italian black metallers siphon the arsenic from the orthodox

After a rather inconsequential intro, Italy's Idolatria slowly pull you into their occultic existence on second album *Tetrabestiarchy*. The band remain staunchly beholden to Scandinavian black metal's second wave, but also to the sonically orthodox and anti-religious black metal scene of their homeland. You won't find any stylistic surprises here, nor were any expected. Idolatria move consistently between blasting blasphemy and slower death marches in militant fashion, albeit with the odd shard of melody cutting through. However, some transitions could do with a sharper sleight of hand to blur the joints and tighten up some of the less impactful sections. Overall, though, the Mayhemic atmosphere distracts you from the least glaring structural issues, and at full-pelt and at their most hate-riddled, these Italians have the promising ability to invoke Marduk.

FOR FANS OF: Marduk, Watain, Funeral Mist

DEAN BROWN

THE INFERNAL SEA
Negotium Crucis
APOCALYPTIC WITCHCRAFT

Medieval missives from England's black metal plague doctors

Three years on from their last release, the scintillating *Agents Of Satan* EP, British plague-masked black metal bruisers The Infernal Sea have returned to unleash a record that is destined to make even more waves for the four-piece. After examining the Black Death on 2016's *The Great Mortality*, here they've dived back into the Middle Ages to explore the dark history of the Knights Templar and the (un)holy crusades. An unflinchingly savage affair, *Negotium Crucis* really benefits from its raw, spartan production. Experimental in places – *Destruction Of Shum* boasts some chanted vocals, while *Befallen Order* has a fret-bothering guitar solo that calls to mind Dave Murray – their black'n'roll side is pushed to the forefront on much of the material and the ice-cold *Field Of The Burned* is a highlight crammed with corrosive vocals and cranium-cracking riffs.

FOR FANS OF: Burial, Kvelertak, Satyricon

EDWIN MCFEE

KATAKLYSM
Unconquered
NUCLEAR BLAST

Canadian veterans still refuse to submit on album 14

Though they've never had a *Slaughter Of The Soul* or *Symbolic* moment, there is a lot to be said for Kataklysm's well-honed reliability over their 29-year career. Furthering their recent penchant for uniting different strands of the death metal spectrum while sounding wholly distinct, 14th effort *Unconquered* has an unwavering bravado that lives up to its moniker. The muscular melodeath of *Cut Me Down* and *Stitches* contrasts with the cybernetic precision of *Underneath The Scars* and the menacing lurch of *The Way Back Home*, all the perfect platform for Maurizio Iacono's vicious vocals. The forlorn *Icarus Falling* and brooding closer *When It's Over* are both underpinned by massive hooks that sink deep, yet when the gates are fully opened for *The Killshot* and *Defiant* to be unleashed the results are utterly seismic, thanks to some of the genre's most proficient and underrated musicians.

FOR FANS OF: At The Gates, Hypocrisy, Sepultura

ADAM REES

KIND
Mental Nudge
RIPPLE MUSIC

Inspired stoner heaviness with a potent sonic pedigree

Kind are a well-cultivated supergroup, featuring former members of Elder and Roadsaw. Their second full-length takes its cue from the stoner sounds of the 90s, and it works well. The combination of Craig Riggs' stark vocals and Darryl Shepard's doom-laden guitarwork draws you in from the start. This combination brings to life the threatening sludge of *Bad Friend* and the haunting Alice In Chains-style bleakness of the title track. There's more of an uptempo feel to *Broken Tweaker* and *It's Your Head*, but these still have a dark menace to drive them onward. *Trigger Happy* is a slothful, monochrome epic teetering on the precipice of insanity and *Faster Number Two* has a venomously spitting melody. Restless yet engaging, this is an album for stoner aficionados.

FOR FANS OF: Kyuss, Monster Magnet, The Atomic Bitchwax

MALCOLM DOME

Svalbard: this generation's heavy lifters

SVALBARD
When I Die, Will I Get Better?
HOLY ROAR

Post-hardcore dissidents cement themselves as an essential voice

WHEN THEY RELEASED *It's Hard To Have Hope* in 2018, Svalbard proved themselves as masters of channelling the zeitgeist. Outspoken, unflinching and obviously pissed off, the album saw the band blend hardcore with black metal and post-rock to rage against the relevant issues of the day. Revenge porn, unpaid internships and sexual assault were all topics openly condemned by Serena Cherry and co on their sophomore album. And while most bands would stop after identifying and shaming the injustice at hand, this quartet also had the self-awareness to go a step further. Every song asked, "How do we make it better?", rejecting nihilism in favour of affirmative action. This wasn't just genre-mandated anger; rather, this was four people earnestly yearning for a more egalitarian world.

When I Die, Will I Get Better? is very much the logical successor to *...Hope*, retaining its razor-sharp analysis and underlying optimism, while also exaggerating its ambient beauty. *What Was She Wearing?*, the abuse-orientated *Open Wound* and especially epilogue *Pearlescent* border on Alcest levels of bliss. However, they never once undermine the venomous drive demonstrated when Svalbard go full hardcore mode. The conclusion to *The Currency Of Beauty* heralds mile-a-minute drumming as vocalist Serena screams, *'Stop fucking raping us!'*, hammering home a track centred around the objectification of women. Similar is the roared message of *Listen To Someone* (*'Listen to someone without judgement'*), trying to teach the seemingly simple ways in which the world can support the mentally ill.

When I Die... is a poignant work that understands the strife faced by the current generation – not to mention the kind of unhindered music they want to hear. It stands as Svalbard's greatest statement yet, affirming them as one of the brightest prospects in a British hardcore scene already full of promising up-and-comers.

FOR FANS OF: Envy, Oathbreaker, Fall Of Messiah

MATT MILLS

Corey Taylor's solo album is full of wall-to-wall bangers

COREY TAYLOR
CMFT
ROADRUNNER

The master of Maggots puts on his party hat

METAL USED TO be fun. Back before it became a gigantic pity party, battalions of magnificent bozos would exalt the joys of getting wasted at the weekend in between riding Harley-Davidsons into swimming pools and ODing in the back rooms of strip clubs. Happier times. Stupider times. Corey Taylor remembers those days. He may have risen to fame as the singer with a band whose career was built on combustible self-loathing, but there was always the sense that he secretly knew where the party was at.

CMFT proves it. His debut solo album sits as far away from Slipknot and Stone Sour as those two bands do from each other, dialling the angst right down and ramping the unashamed tuneage right up. Corey has spent a lot of time recently trumpeting how much fun *CMFT* was to make, and that enthusiasm is infectious; this isn't hair-metal redux, but it carries a sliver of its spirit in its sheer determination to have a good time all of the time.

The album was trailered by a pair of vastly different singles: the skyscraping arena-rock blockbuster *Black Eyes Blue* (one of the best songs here) and the laboured rap-metal throwdown *CMFT Must Be Stopped* (by far the weakest). The stylistic gulf between the two acts as a blueprint for the album; *CMFT* is all over the shop, in the best possible way. One minute he's playing a freewheeling country-metal outlaw on *HWY 666*, the next he's living out his backcombed Poison fantasies on the catchier-than-the-clap *Samantha's Gone*. And yes, there's a grandstanding piano ballad, *Home*, which is *almost* as good as Steel Panther's *Community Property*.

If it's cohesion – or self-flagellation – you're after, stick with Slipknot. But if you want a record to *drive* a motorbike into a swimming pool, *CMFT* is the sound of a revving engine.

FOR FANS OF: Slipknot, Murderdolls, Steel Panther

DAVE EVERLEY

LIK
Misanthropic Breed
METAL BLADE

More quality carnage from the bottomless Swedeath well

Ah, Swedish death metal. When it's good, it's very, very good, and when it's bad… well, it's so rarely bad that completing that adage presents something of a challenge. Stockholm's Lik locate themselves at the Maiden-esque end of the Swedeath spectrum – complete with triumphant leads and galloping tempos – but their riffs are so substantial and infectious that even those for whom melody is anathema may find much to love on the band's third album. The humour that categorised previous releases has been toned down in favour of a more mature approach, but fortunately (or unfortunately depending on your tolerance for waggishness) Lik still find time for a wry nod at Morbid Angel with *Female Fatal To The Flesh*. Lads, eh?

FOR FANS OF: At The Gates, Carnage, Carcass

JOSEPH STANNARD

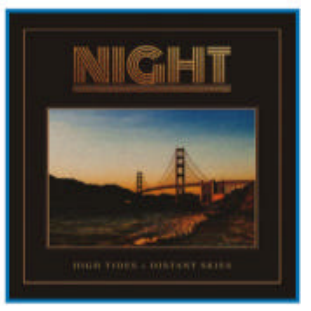
NASTY
Menace
CENTURY MEDIA

Beatdown-primed Belgians forge a groove amidst chaos

These Belgians are established pros of 16 years' standing with a menacing brand of metallic, beatdown hardcore, but the songwriting in their Century Media debut is particularly crushing and memorable. Standout moments include the heady guitar solo that rips through *Addicted*, the deliberate pacing of *Inhale/Exhale* and *Table Of Kings*, and the crazed outpouring of irate vocals throughout *Tricky Plays*. Yes, this was an album charged by the chaos of a pandemic but listening to tracks like *The End Of The World* is as energising as it is exhausting and this is what makes *Menace* so special. The instrumental closing track, complete with the distant sounds of sirens, is a grimly powerful move, too. These guys know what they're doing.

FOR FANS OF: Knuckledust, First Blood, Lionheart

NIK YOUNG



NIGHT
High Tides - Distant Skies
THE SIGN

Swedish 70s revivalists retune their retro antennae

If you know Night's previous album, 2017's *Raft Of The World*, then *High Tides - Distant Skies* will be a little surprising because the band have ditched the 70s-style metal approach on that release for a more melodic, hard rock attitude. The songs draw heavily from early Scorpions, prime Thin Lizzy and classic Blue Öyster Cult – and even occasionally, as on *Crimson Past*, nod in the direction of Dire Straits. The dual guitarwork of Oskar Andersson and Sammy Ouirra is impressive; the pair also share vocals with a structured ease. At its best, on the strident *Lost In A Dream* and the galloping *Under The Moonlight Sky*, *High Tides – Distant Skies* shows Night have finally found their natural direction.

FOR FANS OF: Blue Öyster Cult, Scorpions, Thin Lizzy

MALCOLM DOME

PRESS/ASHLEY OSBORN

NUBIVAGANT
Roaring Eye
AMOR FATI

A melodic black metal masterclass from Blut Aus Nord blastmaster

The first thing that immediately strikes you about *Roaring Eye* is the mournful clean singing that, when paired with rapid blasts and tremolo-flurry guitars, adds an interesting contrast to black metal. The brainchild of Omega, who will be familiar to underground aficionados from his time in Fides Inversa and on the drum-throne for Blut Aus Nord, Moloch and other unsavoury acts, *Roaring Eye* is remarkably well-realised for a debut. Omega's timbre is reminiscent of the yearning melodrama of Primordial's Alan Averill, acting as a magnetic beacon through the deathrocked BM miasma underpinning his impassioned, arcane decrees. The gifted multi-instrumentalist knows exactly what he's aiming for here and strikes a deft balance between melody and extremity, which speaks of his seasoned skills as a composer.

FOR FANS OF: **Primordial, Atriarch, Fides Inversa**

DEAN BROWN

OBSIDIAN KINGDOM
Meat Machine
SEASON OF MIST

Mind-altering menace from Barcelona's post-metal explorers

Forging a worthy follow-up to acclaimed predecessor *A Year With No Summer*, this Catalonian quintet have ventured even further into unexplored sonic territories. *Meat Machine* is aptly titled; cranked up to a suitable volume, it twists and turns, carving out slices of post-metal, experimental rock and late-90s alt-rock, cut through with sudden introspective calms. Opener *The Edge* is a swirling mass of heaving riffs and anguished bellowing, each lumbering groove shrouded in the rumbling dissonance of Daughters' scathing hardcore template. Featuring tumbling waves of unsettling electronica, *Womb Of Wire* is a more Deftones-esque freakout, albeit subtly menacing and trippy as hell. The rest are equally immersive and destined to enthral anyone with a penchant for altered states and arse-shattering riffs. An instantly engaging experience that rewards with each subsequent listen.

FOR FANS OF: **Deftones, Ulver, Daughters**

SOPHIE MAUGHAN

THE OCEAN
Phanerozoic II: Mesozoic / Cenozoic
METAL BLADE

Geological post-metallers chisel a fine-crafted finale.

When they released *Precambrian* in 2007, progressive intellectuals The Ocean started the most epic of epic voyages: using their music to tell the entire history of the Earth. Two albums and 13 years later, *Phanerozoic II* caps off Robin Staps and co's gargantuan odyssey. It bridges the Triassic period and the present day while also proving to be this trilogy's most rounded, essential entry. Prog, post-metal, synth rock and classical music all enjoy their fair shake, with technicality being traded for eclecticism as the runtime progresses. The compositions simplify as they go, but the strings- and keys-led majesty of the latter half compensates beautifully, to the point where penultimate cut *Pleistocene* is a sure-fire career highlight. This is a dynamic conclusion to a saga 4,500 million years in the making, and it's worth every second of the wait.

FOR FANS OF: **Tool, Cult Of Luna, Kontinuum**

MATT MILLS

OTTONE PESANTE
DoomooD
AURAL MUSIC

Italian 'brass metallers' forge some gristle from their creative spark

Rivers Of Nihil, Sunn O))) and Imperial Triumphant may be plying their extreme metal menace with brass these days, but few bands are as committed as this Italian trio. The self-proclaimed 'brass metal' band have ramped up their bellicosity, a possible rub-off from recent collaborations with Cattle Decapitation. While 2018's *Apocalips* showcased plenty of creative pep, there was a dearth of gristle to dig the teeth into. On *DoomooD*, blithe frolics are replaced by malevolent crawls and thundering tremors on horn blasts such as *Coiling Of The Tubas* and the broken-back lurch of *End Will Come When Will Ring The Black Bells*, while the cavernous trombone work on *Grave* emanates like a broadcast from Hell's own cistern. Ottone Pesante manage to buoy the brass-led bedlam of Brain Tentacles with the coruscating throttle of John Zorn's Painkiller, conjuring extreme sounds desolate, enigmatic, yet energising.

FOR FANS OF: **Brain Tentacles, Painkiller, Colin Stetson**

SPENCER GRADY

Touché Amoré: well-trained in the art of post-hardcore atmospherics

TOUCHÉ AMORÉ
Lament
EPITAPH

Los Angeles' impassioned post-hardcore crew expand their scope

WHETHER OR NOT to your taste, it would be tough to challenge this Californian post-hardcore quintet's distinctive talent and emotive storytelling ability. Over time, they've moved from more aggressive but less intricate hardcore punk beginnings to a more deliberate, evocative blend of rousing melodic fretwork, crafty song structures, impassioned raspy screams and occasionally cleaner or spoken-word vocal sections.

2016's Stage Four, which laid bare frontman Jeremy Bolm's struggle to cope with the loss of his mother to cancer, was more vulnerable and less heavy than previous efforts but particularly powerful as a result. *Lament* has much in common with that but, although the lyrics are still raw, the music has evolved to sound more hopeful and even triumphant at times. So while *Lament* is unmistakably Touché Amoré, the bubbling melodies and diverse musical influences make it more accessible than before and there is barely a weak track to be found.

The urgent yells and builds of *Limelight*, featuring Manchester Orchestra's Andy Hull, grow more convincing with each listen. The title track vocals are especially poignant, *A Broadcast* features surprisingly effective folk influences, and *I'll Be Your Host* delivers a bittersweet unison of resigned lyrics and dancing fretwork. Final track *A Forecast* begins with an intimate, unpolished outpouring from Jeremy and his piano and closes with a pool of melodies and raw, heartfelt yells, offering a heady mix of uncomfortable and cathartic.

All 11 tracks have something to say while still resulting in a cohesive and memorable whole and Ross Robinson's production provides a rich, clean translation of the band's unique, atmospheric style while also firmly safeguarding their rugged spirit. Yet again, Touché Amoré have proven that they can flex their wings while remaining true to themselves.

FOR FANS OF: **La Dispute, Being As An Ocean, Piano Become The Teeth**

NIK YOUNG

PRESS/GEORGE CLARKE

Uada's *Djinn* is a tonic for fans of forward-thinking black metal

UADA

Djinn

EISENWALD

Portland's polarising black metallers turn up the heat

UADA BECAME RAPIDLY noteworthy for their technicolour take on black metal traditionalism on 2016's *Devoid Of Light*. 2018's *Cult Of A Dying Sun* was a more ambitious affair that further explored their evident love for the Norwegian second wave's bombastic proponents, the duelling guitars of necrotic vocalist Jake Superchi and James Sloan the main event, wrought with a clarity of production that placed them on the more polished, accessible end of the spectrum. It was captivating for some, not cult enough for others, it's fair to say. On the eve of their third release, *Djinn*, then, the question remains: are Uada the real deal?

As the titular opening track erupts it's clear that the band's sound has reached new heights, focused entirely around the creative relationship of songwriters Superchi and Sloan; the intricate interplay between their guitars are frequently the accelerant that ignites *Djinn*'s six tracks. The opening title track is surprisingly rock-orientated. Leads power over exuberant drums and moments of chest-thumping bombast, providing an early hint that *Djinn* isn't going to rely solely on unrelenting blasts and tremolo picking. Second track *The Great Mirage* quickly explodes into just that, though, only to stomp on the brakes to craft atmospheric grandeur and pave the way for a grandstanding solo. *No Place Here* reignites the inferno and sustains its percussive intensity for 14 minutes as guitars undulate from an angry swarm to baleful grandeur.

Djinn proves time and again that Superchi and Sloan are Uada's heart and soul. Your enjoyment of it depends entirely on what you want from black metal. It struggles to fully envelop you in otherworldly atmospheres; it is esotericism with its edges knocked off by studio polish. You're hereby defied, however, to not feel the hairs rise on the back of your neck at the fervency and conviction of a creative couplet hellbent on shredding you to death.

FOR FANS OF: Watain, Wiegedood, Numenorean

TOM O'BOYLE

PANZERFAUST

The Suns Of Perdition - Chapter II: Render Unto Eden

EISENWALD

Canadian black metallers soar above the battlegrounds

Panzerfaust 2019's *The Suns Of Perdition – Chapter I: War, Horrid War* was the first part of a planned tetralogy of artfully punishing black metal dissecting the human thirst for conflict. *Chapter II* expands on their ability to rend chasms that suck you into violent nothingness while playing with light and shade. The slow-burn intro, *Promethean Fire*, features the haunting melodies of Arkona vocalist Maria Arkhipova, but the depth and voracity of vocalist Goliath alone make *The Faustian Pact* and *The Snare Of The Fowler* all-consuming gullies of pitch-black despair. They're the centre point around which the instruments form an exhilarating event horizon before their annihilation.

FOR FANS OF: Behemoth, Deathspell Omega, Misþyrming

TOM O'BOYLE

JOHN PETRUCCI

Terminal Velocity

SOUND MIND

Dream Theater shredder finds reasons to be happy

The dawn of the COVID-19-catalysed solo album is upon us. Taylor Swift's done one, Corey Taylor's done one and now so has John Petrucci. Joined by ex-bandmate Mike Portnoy, the Dream Theater guitarist has succeeded 2005's *Suspended Animation* with an instrumental album so peppy that it masks the bleakness of the lockdown in which it was recorded. It's the jovial yin to DT's more existential yang, sharing the same technicality while also flaunting a more optimistic sound. Whether it's through the jazz-like smoothness of *Out Of The Blue*, the swaggering *Way Things Fall* or a track aptly named The Happy Song, *Terminal Velocity* is a fun prog metal distraction.

FOR FANS OF: Sithu Aye, Marty Friedman, Dream Theater

MATT MILLS

PLAGUE YEARS

Circle Of Darkness

EONE

Dank, dirty and desolate death/thrash from Detroit

Following Plague Years' rip-roaring 2018 debut LP, *Unholy Infestation*, this second offering may not be quite as frantic but has a heftier, meaner sound, as the band plough through chuggier and more crushing death/thrash riffage, à la *Beneath The Remains*-era Sepultura or a deathlier Power Trip. There's still a lot of hardcore influence, though, not least thanks to Tim Englehardt's burly grunt, which sounds like Jamey Jasta doing his best John Tardy impression with a severely bunged-up nose. There are still suitably speedy cuts like the galloping buzzsaw attack of *Witness Hell*, but *Eternal Fire* slows down to an irresistibly primitive, crunchy stomp, while *Paradox Of Death* introduces some eerie *South Of Heaven*-esque atmospherics. Solid.

FOR FANS OF: Sepultura, Power Trip, Ringworm

KEZ WHELAN

RAVEN
Metal City
STEAMHAMMER/SPV

NWOBHM diehards keep the accelerator floored

Purveyors of neck-wrecking, high-energy heavy metal for the last 46 years, Raven are one of those veteran bands that never get the respect they deserve, largely because they had the audacity to keep going, old school and blinkered to the last. Even by their own unstoppable, exuberant standards, *Metal City* is an explosive and exhausting affair, delivered by the Gallagher brothers (combined age: 121) and new drummer Mike Heller, whose double-kicks and blastbeats have thrown ever more fuel into the Raven engine. Frankly, it's ridiculous that a band that formed in 1974 can sound as pumped-up and exciting as they do on *The Power*, recent single *Top Of The Mountain*, the vicious but goofy *Cybertron* and the Lemmy-saluting *Motorheadin'*. But the Geordies were always a force of nature and heavy metal this joyful and intense will never get old.

FOR FANS OF: Motörhead, Saxon, Paladin

DOM LAWSON

SUMAC
May You Be Held
THRILL JOCKEY

Aaron Turner's avant-sludge maestros lose their bearings

Sumac's fourth album oozes space and atmosphere. Aaron Turner's pressure-valve wall of guitar meat and oscillating sound manipulation are as linear as a housefly's flight pattern and as heavy as an avalanche. Drummer Nick Yacyshyn and bassist Brian Cook underscore this morbidity with a free-jazz sequencing resembling Naked City's *Grand Guignol* album and is as similarly confusing and impenetrable. Yacyshyn makes potent use of cymbal hiss and Cook locks into the fray as best as he can with a bowel-invading rumble. The trouble with *May You Be Held* is its presentation as a lengthy and loosely stitched noise project with a few hypnotic, but generally unmemorable, riffs and patterns woven into seemingly random spots. *Consumed* digs out of a hole with a slow-burn crescendo similar to Isis's *Celestial*, but too much meandering and a lack of cohesion blankets this in frustration.

FOR FANS OF: The Body, Old Man Gloom, Melvins

CONNIE GORDON

SUNKEN
Livslede
VENDETTA

Denmark's atmospheric black metallers continue their ascent

The second full-length from this atmospheric black metal quintet begins with *Forlist*, a 93-second intro of tinkling pianos and echoes of Sigur Rós. It's a tranquil calm before an almighty storm. From there, the Danes whip up a swirling cacophony of tremolo-picked guitars, sumptuous delay and desperate blackened screams. *Livslede* is unhurried in its approach, its five tracks unfurling over 43 minutes, creating a sumptuous bath of sound. Sunken use dynamics to their advantage, the restrained haunting soundscapes and natural harmonics that build over nine minutes on *Delirium* are just as disorientating as the full blastbeat bluster of *Foragt*. Sunken don't quite match the best of their contemporaries, but there's enough promise here to suggest that they may soon be giving them a run for their money.

FOR FANS OF: Wolves In The Throne Room, Møl, Wiegedood

REMFRY DEDMAN

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Dirt Redux
MAGNETIC EYE

Alice In Chains' 1992 masterpiece, doomed and stoned

Following 2019's complete remake of Pink Floyd's *The Wall*, Magnetic Eye Records have turned their attention to one of the ultimate grunge cornerstones. *Dirt Redux* hammers home Alice In Chains' ability to satisfy both mainstream rock fans *and* slaves to the pulverising, Sabbathian dark. Reimagined and sometimes dismantled by all manner of stoner, doom, sludge and psych luminaries, the Seattle icons' finest hour exerts its usual oppressive aura, but with major label sheen replaced with over-driven aberration. Highlights include Khemmis's supremely epic *Down In A Hole*, -(16)-'s brilliantly venomous *Hate To Feel* and Low Flying Hawks' woozy, drone demolition of *Dam That River*. Not everyone takes risks – High Priest's *Rain When I Die* is eerily close to the original – but overall this is a classy, imaginative tribute that reveals new and greater depths in these devastating anthems.

FOR FANS OF: Soundgarden, Alice In Chains, Graveyard

DOM LAWSON

Venom Prison: still up in alms

VENOM PRISON
Primeval
PROSTHETIC

Death metal iconoclasts take a step back to surge forward

HAILED AS AN ACT who do 21st-century death metal better than pretty much every new band out there by this very magazine, Venom Prison have captured the hearts and minds of many fans of extreme music since first bursting onto the scene in 2015. Led by the increasingly iconic Larissa Stupar, last year's *Samsara* saw the Anglo-Russian quintet deftly side-stepping those difficult second-album jitters by delivering an opus that not only lived up to the considerable hype but gave a gleeful sonic two-fingered salute to the doubters too.

Primeval now sees the trailblazers return to their roots and features re-recordings of early EPs, *Defy The Tyrant* and *The Primal Chaos*, plus two newly minted cuts. While polishing up previous past glories has often been a risky move for some acts and could be viewed as a step back, for Venom Prison it's another stride forward. The material has been sharpened up considerably after spending the guts of half a decade shedding blood, sweat and tears on the road and these bulldozing 2020 versions could level Mount Olympus itself.

Babylon The Whore in particular really benefits from the re-recording treatment and sounds even more bludgeoning. Larissa's voice is monstrous on this righteous slab of sound and fury as she roars lines like *'I am vengeance for countless rapes and murders'*. *Defy The Tyrant* is another standout and this early track, which set the blueprint for their hardcore-spiced brand of politicised death metal, sounds just as fresh and vital now as it did in 2015.

Saving the best 'til last, bullish new cuts *Defiant To The Will Of God* and *Slayer Of Holofernes* – both of which are emboldened by some clean vocals – reaffirm that while Venom Prison's past is exhilarating, their future looks like it will be even more exciting.

FOR FANS OF: Carcass, Cattle Decapitation, Aborted

EDWIN MCFEE

DATES SUBJECT TO CHANGE

LIVE EVIL

Your essential guide to the best and the biggest metal bands hitting the UK

BLACK STONE CHERRY

SEP 9 2021 BRISTOL O2 Academy
SEP 10 2021 BIRMINGHAM O2 Academy
SEP 11 2021 LINCOLN Engine Shed
SEP 13 2021 NOTTINGHAM Rock City
SEP 14 2021 LEEDS O2 Academy
SEP 16 2021 MANCHESTER O2 Apollo
SEP 17 2021 GLASGOW Barrowland
SEP 18 2021 EDINBURGH Usher Hall
SEP 20 2021 NEWCASTLE O2 Academy
SEP 21 2021 LIVERPOOL O2 Academy
SEP 23 2021 FOLKESTONE Leas Cliff Hall
SEP 24 2021 CARDIFF St Davids Hall
SEP 25 2021 EXETER Great Hall
SEP 27 2021 SOUTHAMPTON O2 Guildhall
SEP 28 2021 CAMBRIDGE Corn Exchange
SEP 29 2021 LONDON Royal Albert Hall

BLOODSTOCK OPEN AIR

DEVIN TOWNSEND, JUDAS PRIEST, MERCYFUL FATE, SAXON, BURY TOMORROW, SKINDRED, DIMMU BORGIR, DARK TRANQUILLITY, THE BLACK DAHLIA MURDER, ORANGE GOBLIN, SYLOSIS, LIFE OF AGONY, JINJER, SVALBARD, GLORY HAMMER, SACRED REICH, VIO-LENCE + MORE

AUG 11-15 2021 DERBYSHIRE Catton Hall

DESTRUCTION
WARBRINGER
CRISIX
DOMINATION

DEC 2 LONDON The Dome
DEC 3 MANCHESTER Academy 3
DEC 4 LIMERICK Dolan's Warehouse
DEC 5 DUBLIN Voodoo Lounge
DEC 6 GLASGOW Slay

DOWNLOAD FESTIVAL

KISS, SYSTEM OF A DOWN, KORN, DEFTONES, GOJIRA, KILLSWITCH ENGAGE, SEPULTURA, STEEL PANTHER, ELECTRIC WIZARD, A.A. WILLIAMS, BARONESS, LACUNA COIL, TWIN TEMPLE, AIRBOURNE, ALESTORM, EMPLOYED TO SERVE, OBITUARY, VOLBEAT + MORE

JUNE 4-6 2021 DERBYSHIRE Castle Donington

ENSLAVED
CINEMATIC TOUR

SEP 30 UTGARD – The Journey Within (online)

EVANESCENCE
WITHIN TEMPTATION

SEP 30 2021 GLASGOW SSE Hydro Arena
OCT 1 2021 LEEDS First Direct Arena
OCT 3 2021 BIRMINGHAM Arena
OCT 4 2021 LONDON The O2

FAITH NO MORE

JUN 7 MANCHESTER O2 Apollo
JUN 8 MANCHESTER O2 Apollo
JUN 9 GLASGOW O2 Academy
JUN 11 BIRMINGHAM O2 Academy
JUN 12 LONDON O2 Academy Brixton
JUN 13 LONDON O2 Academy Brixton

HELLOWEEN

MAY 22 MANCHESTER Academy
MAY 23 LONDON O2 Brixton Academy

KILL THE LIGHTS

MAR 3 BOURNEMOUTH Anvil Rock Bar
MAR 4 BRIGHTON The Green Door Store
MAR 5 LONDON Boston Music Room
MAR 6 BRIDGEND Hobos
MAR 8 BRISTOL Rough Trade
MAR 9 LEEDS The Key Club
MAR 10 NOTTINGHAM The Old Salutation Inn
MAR 12 GLASGOW The Garage
MAR 14 BIRMINGHAM The Asylum Venue
JUN 4 DERBYSHIRE Download Festival

LAMB OF GOD
KREATOR

DEC 14 2021 BRISTOL O2 Academy
DEC 15 2021 MANCHESTER Academy
DEC 16 2021 GLASGOW O2 Academy
DEC 17 2021 BIRMINGHAM O2 Academy
DEC 19 2021 LONDON O2 Academy Brixton

LEEDS FESTIVAL 2021

AUG 27-29 LEEDS Brahman Park

LUCIFER

NOV 7 GREAT YARMOUTH Hard Rock Hell
NOV 8 LONDON Underworld

Kill The Lights, featuring some familiar faces from BFMV and Still Remains

ROAD TRIPPIN'

KILL THE LIGHTS

Releasing your debut in a pandemic year ain't easy, but these Welsh lads made the best of it

Putting your first album out when the world has just stopped in its tracks can't be the easiest way to get going. What's that been like?
Moose (drums): "It's a confusing and stressful time for a lot of people, especially in our industry. But myself and the guys in the band have been sitting on this album for almost two years now, so it's nice to finally be able to put it out there."

You have some dates announced for March – won't you be absolutely gagging to get on a stage by then?
"Yes! Most definitely. We've been ready to go now for the last 12 months! There's gonna be a lot of energy going into these shows, and we can't wait to meet as many people as we can. So yeah, we're all very excited to tour."

You're also doing Download next year – what do you think or hope the future of festivals looks like?
"Well, I hope they stay as we all know and love – I can't imagine a festival any other way. I love the whole vibe of everyone being in the same place. People who love and enjoy music. And, obviously, a few cold ones."

Do you think things like drive-in gigs can work?
"It was an interesting idea – but for me, it's a no. The whole 'vibe' of the live show will be lost. I sure hope that things will continue the way they were before this pandemic. I don't think I could drive up to a show and stand or sit next to my car and be able to really get into the music."

What else do you have coming up in 2020?
"For now, it's just writing new songs while we're all at home, and spending time with our families. I've been drumming most days, as well as getting into running on the treadmill."

What'd be your absolute dream tour to get to play on?
"Right now, my dream tour is any tour that gets the go-ahead! A Metallica tour would be insane, or an opening slot for Slipknot would be killer. But a headline tour with my band is in my sights at the moment. Let's see what comes around the corner when all this is over!"

KILL THE LIGHTS: PRESS

Butcher Babies: missing their festival family

ROAD TRIPPIN'

BUTCHER BABIES

Heidi, Carla et al filmed a special gig for the European Metal Festival Alliance last month

How has your 2020 been so far?
Carla Harvey (vocals): "A whirlwind of emotions! I had plans to move from LA (my home of 20 years) to Chicago, and when the pandemic hit it made the experience even more stressful! I had to leave early, practically pack up my whole life overnight and settle in to a new home in the weirdest of times."
Heidi Shepherd (vocals): "A shitshow to say the least. I'm sure the whole music industry can say the same. Between tours cancelled, albums pushed back, and the world stopping as we know it, it's been a humbling year of learning. We have some really emotional songs on the horizon from this experience."

You recorded a set for Bloodstock during the European Festival Metal Alliance. How did you put it together?
Carla: "Since the whole band lives in different states now we made quarantine-style videos, each of us recording separately from home. We haven't played *I Smell A Massacre* live in years and people always ask for it so we thought that'd be a treat for people. We made three new videos but also had some never-before-seen live footage from a Vegas show. Rewatching that Vegas show was bittersweet; Vinnie Paul had been at our show that night, it was filmed just a few days before he died."

How do you think it went in the end?
Carla: "Nothing beats attending festivals in person for bands and concert goers alike, however for now, this is the best we can do. We had fun making the videos and I think the fans had fun making their homes their mini festival campsites."

What are you missing most about festival season?
Heidi: "Festival season is like a giant family reunion for us. Not just with all the bands, but all the fans as well. That high that we all get to share is unlike anything else in the world."

How's the rest of your 2020 shaping up?
Heidi: "I'm spending the rest of the year focusing on my gratitude for all of the beautiful things that I have in my life. Oh, we're also going to release some music! Yay!"
Carla: "We have some big news on the release of our fourth album coming up. I can't wait for you to hear the new stuff!"

BUTCHER BABIES: PRESS. JUDAS PRIEST: KEVIN NIXON.

Judas Priest: don't miss the Metal God and co supporting Ozzy

MAYHEM
MORTIIS
MAR 23 MANCHESTER Academy 2
MAR 24 LIMELIGHT Belfast
MAR 25 DUBLIN Academy
MAR 26 GLASGOW Slay
MAR 27 BRISTOL The Fleece
MAR 28 LONDON Islington Academy

NIGHTWISH
DEC 16 CARDIFF Motorpoint Arena
DEC 18 LONDON SSE Arena Wembley

THE OCEAN
FEB 4 BRISTOL The Fleece
FEB 5 GLASGOW Slay
FEB 6 MANCHESTER Club Academy
FEB 7 LONDON 229
FEB 8 BRIGHTON Patterns

ORANGE GOBLIN
DEC 11 DUBLIN Grand Social
DEC 12 BELFAST Limelight
DEC 14 GLASGOW King Tuts
DEC 15 MANCHESTER Gorilla
DEC 16 BIRMINGHAM Asylum
DEC 17 CARDIFF The Globe
DEC 18 LONDON Underworld
DEC 19 LONDON Underworld

OZZY OSBOURNE
JUDAS PRIEST
OCT 23 NEWCASTLE Utilita Arena
OCT 25 GLASGOW SSE Hydro Arena
OCT 28 LONDON O2 Arena
OCT 31 BIRMINGHAM Resorts World Arena
NOV 2 MANCHESTER Arena
NOV 5 DUBLIN 3Arena
NOV 8 NOTTINGHAM Motorpoint Arena

PARKWAY DRIVE
HATEBREED, CRYSTAL LAKE
APR 18 LONDON Wembley Arena

RAMMSTEIN
JUN 12 BELFAST Boucher Road Playing Fields
JUN 16 CARDIFF Principality Stadium
JUN 19 COVENTRY Ricoh Arena

READING FESTIVAL 2021
AUG 27-29 READING Richfield Avenue

SKUNK ANANSIE
OCT 26 GUILDFORD G Live
OCT 27 LEICESTER O2 Academy
OCT 28 FOLKSTONE Leas Cliff Hall
NOV 28 LINCOLN Engine Shed
NOV 29 NOTTINGHAM Rock City
DEC 1 GLASGOW O2 Academy
DEC 2 NEWCASTLE O2 Academy
DEC 3 LEEDS O2 Academy
DEC 5 CARDIFF University Great Hall
DEC 6 BRISTOL O2 Academy
DEC 7 MANCHESTER O2 Victoria Warehouse
DEC 9 BRIGHTON Dome
DEC 10 CAMBRIDGE Corn Exchange

SLAM DUNK FESTIVAL
MAY 29 LEEDS Temple Newsam
MAY 30 HATFIELD Hatfield Park

THUNDER
UGLY KID JOE
MAY 13 CARDIFF Motorpoint Arena
MAY 14 BIRMINGHAM Resorts World Arena
MAY 15 LONDON SSE Wembley Arena
MAY 22 GLASGOW SEC
MAY 23 LEEDS Arena

LIVE REVIEWS

EUROPEAN METAL FESTIVAL ALLIANCE

WWW.METALFESTIVALALLIANCE.COM

Sabaton, Avatar and Rotting Christ join forces with a host of festival behemoths

FRIDAY

European Metal Festival Alliance is a live-streamed joint venture bringing together the best acts of 13 pandemic-halted independent festivals including Bloodstock, Brutal Assault, Dynamo, Midgardsblot and Summer Breeze, in a valiant attempt to conjure the much-missed metalhead communion that summer usually promises. **CULT OF FIRE** make for a ceremonial start, clad in ornate robes on a stage dripping in human skulls, snake thrones (really) and candelabras, but their emotive black metal at times risks being eclipsed by the onstage pageantry. **VENOM PRISON** instantly pulverise with the death/grind of *Matriphagy*. Larissa Stupar's raw-throated convulsions are a much-needed focal point as they decimate what preceded them. **KAMPFAR** stand astride a stage incandescent with flaming candles and torches inside Midgardsblot's reconstructed Gildehalle. While they lack Cult Of Fire's theatrics, Dolk's summoning screams prove why they are an enduring force. **ALIEN WEAPONRY**'s set is pre-recorded, with a crowd in attendance, making the young trio's potential-filled but nascent take on Machine Head/Gojira-esque grooves and gang shouts feel kinetic, and they sign off with a none-more-metal Haka. Fittingly, although pre-recorded, **AMENRA**'s performance is utterly spellbinding. They play facing each other in a circle lit by a ring of fire at their centre, with void-piercing strobes all around, while Colin van Eeckhout's conduit for raw human emotion flows freely from vulnerably beautiful to desperately, crushingly cataclysmic. **PARASITE INC**'s synth-elevated, clinical melodeath provides a satisfyingly brutal, if a little perfunctory, return to earth. **BUTCHER BABIES** pummel a Las Vegas throng, but despite Heidi Shepherd and Carla Harvey's

Venom Prison throw some death metal shade

energetically bellicose stage command, theirs is an anodyne act of rebellion. **ROTTING CHRIST** round out day one with a pre-recorded set that begins with the slow-burn of *ΧΞΣ* and ramps up into an imperious statement of power. They conjure a reverent aura of sonorous blasphemy that they've honed as elder statesmen of the extreme arts. Non serviam!

THE SET
AVATAR

A Statue Of The King
Hail The Apocalypse
Paint Me Red
King's Harvest
Bloody Angel
The Eagle Has Landed
For The Swarm
Ready For The Ride
Get In Line
Tower
Puppet Show
Let It Burn
King After King
Smells Like A Freakshow
The King Welcomes You To Avatar Country

SATURDAY

Watching Siberia's **NYTT LAND** is akin to being part of some celestial ritual, as they weave an enchanting tapestry of traditional Nordic folk darkened by shamanic-type mystery, and evocative throat singing. From the hellish grandeur of *Aufbruch* to *Letz Sonne*'s high-pitched, lamenting guitars and primal screams, **DER WEG EINER FREIHEIT**'s black metal is a merciless white-knuckle ride shot through with emotional poignancy and avant-garde atmospherics. With faecal-themed songs like *Anal Error* and *Shit Busters*, **GUTALAX**'s breakneck goregrind will either turn your stomach or have you waving your bog roll along in time to the Czech quartet's explosion of cricket growls, d-beats and indecipherable shouts. **LEGION OF THE DAMNED**'s fusion of old-school 80s thrash and rasping death metal growls doesn't bring anything particularly new to the table, but is executed with enough vicious intensity to hold your attention. Tearing relentlessly through a cross-section of songs new and old, **VENOM INC** conjure theatrical ambience alongside a hypnotic thrash stew of thundering grooves and ominous basslines as *Time To Die* and timeless classic *Black Metal* sit fearlessly beside one another. **ANGELUS APATRIDA** are practically playing each other's instruments, given their close proximity onstage. *Sharpen The Guillotine* explodes like a loaded-up hirsute grenade, while the full-throttle riff extravaganza of *One Of Us* nods heartily to thrash godfathers Metallica. Fireworks and fanfares introduce **AVATAR**'s headlining set from last year's Alcatraz Festival, and the Swedish oddballs are decked out in royal-cum-military garbs with a painted-up Johannes Eckerström leading his carnivalesque charge into a gloriously overblown salvo of *A Statue Of The King* and *Hail The Apocalypse*. There's plenty of batshit between-song interaction courtesy of the eccentric frontman, who is on fine form, elsewhere veering wildly between throat-ripping screams and soaring histrionics during a triumphant blaze of NWOBHM-inspired riffery.

SUNDAY

DEAD LORD kick off Sunday with hand-held camera footage from a homely rehearsal room. This isn't just the perfect way to communicate their loose, intimate hard rock jams; it also reveals that their curtains are as indebted to 1970s aesthetics as their tunes. Slovenia's **SKYEYE** drag the show into the 80s, with Jan Lešanec's awesome Dickinson-ian wail and energy levels ramped up, even in an empty venue. French black/death masters **SVART CROWN** come closest to grasping the event's cinematic capabilities, their tremendous jet-black set augmented with classical columns,

Clockwise from top: Amenra, Orange Goblin, Sabaton, Avatar, Alien Weaponry

aerial shots, tracking shots and moody lighting. **EVERGREY**'s gloomy gothic power-prog suffers slightly from midpoint lull, but they enrich the bill with a set of moods and sounds that they've got to themselves today.

All day we'd been wondering how **PRIMORDIAL**'s rabble-rousing frontman Alan Averill would approach performing without any rabble to rouse, so initially it's a disappointment that they've chosen to donate a five-year-old gig from Party.San. Of course, it's an epic set, but it doesn't feel quite in the spirit of this event, and the muddy mix highlights what powerful sound EMFA 2020 has gifted its bespoke performances. Proving the point, **ORANGE GOBLIN** come roaring out of the speakers with a raucous, pummelling set, cherry-picking essentials from (almost) each of the band's nine albums. Although Ben Ward seems rather adrift without a crowd to work, the imposing frontman's gruff, party-hard roar is bang on, and by the time he implores the laptop-viewing public to "get on our feet and go fucking crazy", it's unthinkable that anyone could refuse.

And so to ever-reliable Swedish war machine **SABATON**, donating their full, pyro-stacked 2019 Bloodstock headline set to bring the event to a triumphant climax. We might miss the fields rammed with sweaty, drunken headbangers, but if EMFA is the standard of the COVID-enforced alternative, just for one year, we think we can cope.

TOM O'BOYLE/SOPHIE MAUGHAN/ CHRIS CHANTLER

PRESS

Vile Creature offer a multitude of paths through their livestream

VILE CREATURE

GLORYGLORYLIVE.COM

Ontario's gender-deconstructing duo take the livestream beyond the box

WITH THE FUTURE of gigs still up in the air, the livestream has seen a resurgence, ranging from lavishly shot, cinematic concert films to phone camera broadcasts. It's impossible to fully replicate that visceral first-hand experience of course, but Canadian doom/sludge duo Vile Creature's elaborate effort comes closer than most. Rather than simply jamming out in front of a webcam, the pair have constructed a 'choose your own adventure' book, in an ambitious and entirely charming attempt to bring you the complete vicarious gig experience. During a text prologue, you'll face such difficult decisions as choosing which shirt to wear, attempting a carpool with your mates or going it alone on your bike, or even whether to bail on the gig entirely and get distracted by a surreal haunted house side-quest.

Play your cards right, however, and you'll arrive just in time to catch the band perform their latest album, *Glory, Glory! Apathy Took Helm!* in its entirety, complete with synth accompaniment from Sean Pearson and haunting vocals from Laurel Minnes. It's a powerful set, with the band playing with palpable emotion and the sound capturing that rich, full-bodied and earthquaking guitar tone with gusto. It's well shot too, with the option to enjoy multiple camera angles or choosing a specific spot if you want to make it feel more realistic. That's if you even watch it at all; if you'd rather chat shit in the smoking area all night, the option is there ("Thou does it better," quips one punter). There's even a variety of different endings to choose from after the show.

A lot more thought and effort has gone into this stream than most, and with an understanding that gigs are as much about socialising as they are getting battered by a wall of riffs, Vile Creature have created a unique experience that's as heart-warming as it is skull-crushing.

KEZ WHELAN

ARCTURUS

MØLLA FESTIVAL, GJERSTAD, NORWAY

Two shows, two different setlists – it's a neat idea, more bands should do it. To a socially distanced crowd of 150 – and a global streaming audience of many hundreds more – **ARCTURUS**, Norway's experimental black metal supergroup par excellence, perform effectively half their entire output since 1994 in two 80-minute sets. Here's a band who seem to have felt the strain over lockdown, looking and sounding delighted to be playing music together again - especially guitarist Knut and bassist Skoll, beaming and bopping away while ICS Vortex hams up the lunacy, giving unorthodox voice to a range of spectral alien possessors. Hellhammer, of course, remains impassive, laying down his propulsive precision drum barrage without fuss or even apparent effort, while Sverd contorts in the shadows behind his triumphing synth, equal parts 70s prog organ maestro and symphonic black metal wizard. On both nights, the delay between visuals and sound and the occasional momentary dropout provide an unwanted distraction from the cosmic magic onstage, but Arcturus are a richly off-kilter, out-of-step experience to begin with, so what would seem an annoying tech quibble with any other band becomes just another layer of high-concept disorientation in Arcturian hands.

CHRIS CHANTLER

BETWEEN THE BURIED AND ME

TWITCH LIVE

Performing 2007's *Colors* in its entirety two nights in a row, **BETWEEN THE BURIED AND ME** treat an audience of 5,000 Twitch users to a voyage of fiendish ingenuity and dazzling skill from drummer "Blake's Parents' Basement" in North Carolina where the album was written. Not that you'd notice what a daunting undertaking it is from the relaxed demeanour of the performers, who eat strawberries during the hoedown of *Ants Of The Sky*, pull silly gurns at the handheld camera and show viewers pictures of their dogs. This laidback approach belies the complexity of the continuous 50-minute piece, with few repeating parts and countless dynamic shifts, which still sounds as lavish and groundbreaking 13 years on. What's more, BTBAM perform it flawlessly with no breaks until the lightspeed fingering of Tommy Giles Rogers on *White Walls* sadly comes off the rails and seemingly breaks the stream in the final moments. It at least gives a chance for the band to replace broken drum stools, discuss their bum notes and flip water bottles, before the encore of *Selkies: The Endless Obsession* and a jovial Q&A to finish.

ADAM REES

PRESS

MIDGARDSBLOT ONLINE

WWW.MIDGARDSBLOT.NO

Borre's beloved fest finds new ways to channel the Viking spirit

THE TEAM BEHIND Norway's Midgardsblot festival have steered away from fancy CGI stages and live replays with their venture into online festival territory. Firmly grounded in their festival site upon the Viking burial grounds of Borre, they offer not only music, but lectures and ceremonies to unleash the true spirit of the blot upon the digital landscape.

History lessons from the Midgard vikingsenter offer a sober connection to the festival's impressive home, while the original Mimir Talks (named after the Norse god of knowledge) have taken on a life of their own online. Almost everything on offer here is new and exclusive. Interviews with **IHSAHN** and **KAMPFAR**'s Dolk reveal the connection between Norwegian black metal and the country's rich heritage, while we are also treated to an in-depth and intimate conversation with **HEILUNG**. A tour of the reconstructed Viking hall includes the Old Norse tale of Frey and Gerðr, as displayed by the colourful wood carvings adorning the structures internal pillars.

These same columns frame **FOLKET BORTAFOR NORDAVINDEN** as they take the stage for the festival's sole live performance. These Viking garb-clad bards fill the imperial structure with their raw and utterly authentic folk-styled music - made all the more special after an honest sit-down with Folket founder Benny Braaten. A stag's skull marks Benny's mic as the group chant in harmony under candlelight, accompanied by their medieval-era instruments and shamanic drumming. There are no epic soundscapes or high-level production to be heard throughout the apt setting; this is primal earth music with a truly communal spirit. The band's tribal energy and unconventional melodies make it easy to see why it appeals to us metalheads.

Seeing the concert out is Mannaz, the rune of humanity, set alight at the festival's campsite. The closing ceremony is an important part of Midgardsblot, and this ritual captures its magic. The festival team have once again achieved something unique: an affectionate welcome home to their loyal community, transcending music and distance to shine brightly beyond the digital space. Until next year!

ALICE PATTILLO

LINDA TVEITEN

Folket Bortafor Nordavinden have their own version of the stag do

Northlane: Marcus Bridge has battled the darkness

NORTHLANE

ROUNDHOUSE, SYDNEY

Sydney's metalcore mavens revisit an emotional turning point

IN THEIR *NEGATIVE* *Energy* documentary, released earlier this year, Northlane revealed there had been a lot riding on their 2019 album, *Alien*. Its predecessor, 2017's starry, melodic *Mesmer*, had underperformed, leaving the band facing falling sales and dwindling crowds. Had *Alien* also flopped, you probably wouldn't be reading this review, but luckily, it didn't – the record was the biggest of the Aussies' career, and the world tour that followed almost completely sold out across the board. This livestream focuses on the band's crowning achievement: their capacity show at the Sydney Roundhouse in August 2019, and their biggest show to date.

Unsurprisingly, the setlist is heavy on the *Alien* material, which is groovier, heavier and fuelled by claustrophobic electronics, pushing aside *Mesmer*'s angular textures. On its release, many fans bemoaned Northlane's departure from their more techy sensibilities, but the band seem energised by the second chance the newer material has afforded them, and as jagged opener *Talking Heads* explodes, like a chestburster erupting violently from its host, it's clearly packing a more visceral punch.

Frontman Marcus Bridge has used the lyrics on *Alien* to delve into his troubled upbringing and his traumatic memories living with heroin-addicted parents, and although *4D* and *Freefall* career along on skittering beats and blissful, vibrant choruses, that dark undercurrent pervades. A few months before this show, Marcus's mother passed away, leaving their difficult relationship unresolved, and those emotions come to a head on the live debut of *Sleepless*. Back in his home city for the first time since her death, as he wipes away tears, dressed in a shimmering cloak, the singer puts in a mesmerising, moving vocal performance. In meeting his demons head on and working through his pain, Marcus has led the band through the darkness for the most triumphant performance of their career.

DANNII LEIVERS

NEAL WALTERS

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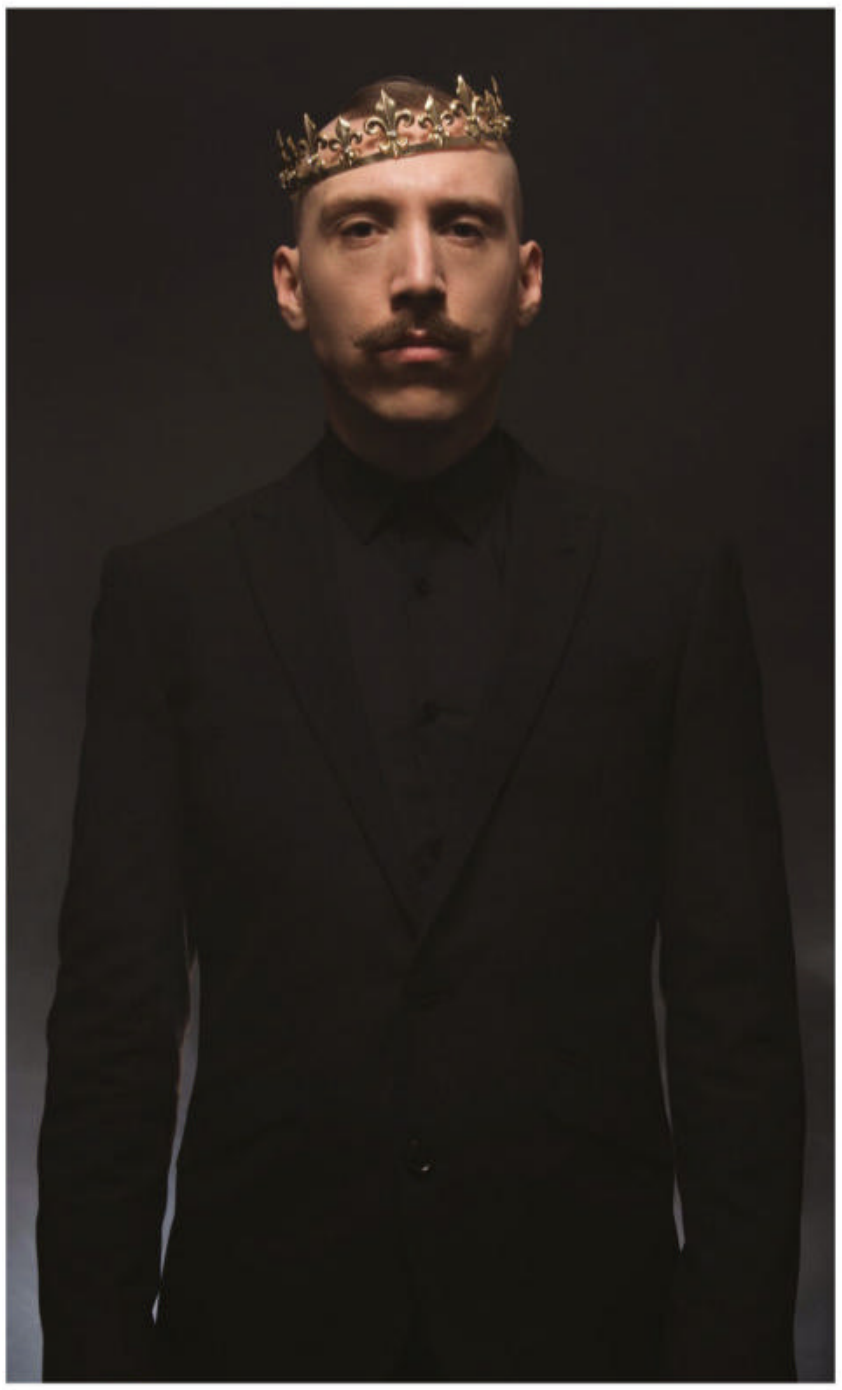
FIVE MINUTES WITH JAMIE LENMAN

The former Reuben man doles out some vital 'tache tips and is apparently very impressed by the colour green

WORDS: STEPHEN HILL



What's the worst thing about being in a band?
"Not being able to get paid for your calling, your vocation. It used to be a career option, an actual viable job choice, but now you can't get paid enough from being in a band… So that's why I'm not in a band anymore."

What's the best piece of advice you've been given?
"I think it was – this is gonna sound dopey – 'Don't go to bed angry!' No, that's not relevant, actually I was speaking to a guy about illustration and he said that you should always do what you think is the right thing to do and other people will eventually catch on. I think I've always tried to do that. I think that advice is very valuable."

When the first time you felt like a rock star?
"Wow! I can't remember what venue it was, but they had a green room that was actually green. I didn't know that green room was just a name for the room you use for gigs, so I presumed that, because this room was actually green, I was finally in a green room. Like, 'Wow, now I've fucking made it!' I didn't realise those backstage areas before were really green rooms, but the walls and the floor and the chairs were green so I was sitting there feeling like a pretty big dog!"

When was the last time you cried?
"I came home from a tour and lots of little things were getting on top of me and I just went to pieces in the bath. It was quite scary for my wife; I tend not to get upset about one big thing, it's usually a lot of little things building up at once. I had been speaking to a friend who had some pretty horrible experiences happen to him and I just took a lot of that on myself."

What's been your worst experience on drugs?
"A long, long time ago a guy gave me some poppers. I didn't know what it was but the guy just said 'Take this', and I did and my face swelled up and went purple and it was one of the worst experiences of my life. I don't drink or do drugs; it's just part of band and British culture that you're expected to drink, you used to get a six-pack of beer and no food, so I went onstage drunk a few times. But it's really unhealthy, I think."

"MY FACE WENT PURPLE FROM POPPERS"

So do you consider yourself straight edge, then?
"Not at all, that's a strict credo. I guess I'm similar but it's purely accidental. I eat meat as well, that happens in our house. What else is straight edge? Casual sex, I've had that – most of the sex I have is pretty casual, actually. I'm a fairly laid-back kind of guy."

What's your advice to those people who are thinking of maybe growing a moustache?
"Oh, stick it out. Have faith in your ability to grow that moustache. For about two years I had to cover my top lip with my hand; I had the most pathetic, wispy little thing and people would say to me, 'You can't grow a moustache!' Don't listen to them! You can, my friend, YOU CAN!"

How long, exactly, did it take to cultivate yours?
"Ten years it took me to get this mighty soup strainer! It's not too hard to maintain; it's like your hair, it all depends on the style. People see me and they think it's hard work, but I let it hang loose sometimes. Don't worry about it."

How exciting was the early-00s scene in Britain that you came up in while in Reuben?
"Very exciting. I always wanted to be in a scene, like the punk scene or the two-tone scene, and I couldn't see how we knitted together at the time. But now, I look back in retrospect we were all vital and intelligent bands."

If you had a pound every time someone asked you when Reuben were going to reform, how many pounds would you have?
"Put it this way: we'd have enough to have not had to have split Reuben up in the first place. This is the question I get asked the most." H

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